

# THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

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## *SOME SICK POOR.*



'DOES she cough any?'

'Well, yes, sir, she do. At times. Occasionally.'

'Does she take her food?'

'Well, no, sir, she don't. Not proper.'

'Does she take about half what she ought?'

'Well, no, sir, she don't, as I may say. Not that, scarcely.'

The case had aspects which were serious, evidently. That could be told by the Professor

being silent a moment, attentive; by his students—grouped round him and his patient—respectfully marking his questions and his attention, and maintaining that attitude whilst he took out his watch and felt his patient's pulse.

'Prepare such and such drugs,' he says at last to one of the students, who disappears through the Dispensary door to do it; the others seemingly glad that they can stay and listen to the rest. 'It's a case of exhaustion,' the Professor makes known then. 'She's weak. She must have stimulants. Coax her with her diet, and let her be. In a week, come again.—Next case.'

The students and attendants break their little knot open to let this first case go, and to let the second case come; and then they close in again as before.

'What's the matter here?'

'Lame, sir.' To further which statement, a leg, that is the affected leg, is taken off the ground, and is held, the sole of the foot uppermost, that the Professor may see.

His expert and kind hand is put round the—ankle, say (which is far from being the technical word, but it will do); his expert touch is applied to the joint gently, pressing in, and again pressing by a move up and along; and he signs that the leg may be put down.

'Let me see it walk,' is his order. When at once the students and attendants are dissipated again, that room may be made for the walking to be done; it is done a few yards on the open stones, out where there is space to judge; and the Professor cries, 'That will do,' intimating that the patient may be led back to where he stands.

'Mr. Learner,' he says, calling one of the students by name; 'can you assign a cause for the lameness?'

Mr. Learner takes the patient's foot up and examines it; places the patient's foot down; passes his hand round, and above, and below, repeating the movements of his watchful instructor; and when such terms catch the ear, out of the short haze of private talking, as 'small bony nodule,' 'periosteal deposit,' 'periostitis,' and so on, it may be presumed that Mr. Learner hazards, or is skilfully helped up to, the elucidation required from him, and is showing that his College sessions have been made profitable by him, duly.

'Then what treatment should you advise?'

The work of introspection has to be done again; it is done; there is again a short silence during it, with a short talk following; and the conclusion that Mr. Learner hazards, or is again skilfully directed to, is the right conclusion clearly, for the Professor endorses it.

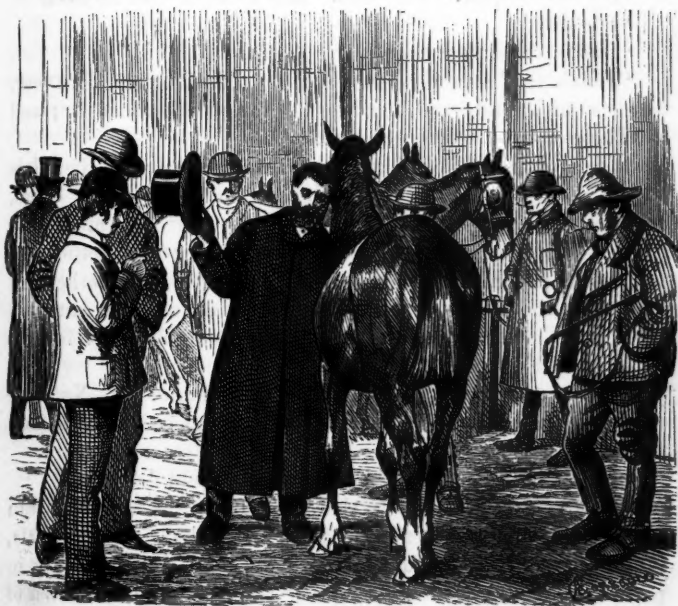
'Yes,' he says; and turning to the poor man who has brought the poor patient, he gives him full directions. 'Put on hot-water bandages, and give it rest—entire rest, mind you. Keep the bandages on two hours at a time. Do that for three or four days, and then let the bandages be cold. And come to me again.—Next case.'

It is a case (when the little knot of young men, for the passage out, have unknotted themselves, and, after the new passage in, have knotted themselves up again) which proves to have more gravity about it than any case presented for examination during

all of the gratis, or pauper, afternoon. A wrap is round the poor sufferer for warmth; and the thorough indisposition 'present' is shown by a drooping head, a dull eye, tremor, and a faint sobbing cough.

'Take the temperature,' says the Professor to a student.

He is himself marking the patient's pulse, doing it by means that are unexpected, possibly; for whilst his watch is in his left hand, and he is counting by it, the fingers of his right hand are



upon the sufferer's chin or under-jaw; but he wants more knowledge than this will afford him; and when his pupil has consulted the thermometer as he directs, reporting that it registers as high an amount of heat as  $101^{\circ}$ , he wants more knowledge still.

'Mr. Firstyear,' he says, with that good organisation of his that leads him to employ each student according to aptitude and in turn, 'my stethoscope is not here. May I trouble you to run for it to my room?—Where's the owner?' he asks, during the

been given. The Professor, however, in the face of these pupils of his, and being there, within those Camden Town College walls, to give them veterinary instruction, and to give poor costermongers, on certain particular afternoons, the gratis veterinary advice for which they can not afford to pay—the Professor has his own straight question to put over all cases brought to him, this new one amongst them, and in his own straight way he puts it.

‘What’s wrong here?’

‘Lame, sir, please, sir.’

It is a lad speaks, the lad who is with the pony, a plump-faced chap, all lips and dirty rosiness, who himself would certainly have no objection to apples or sugar either, from the age and style of him; and with this brought to the mind not unpleasantly, he is heard saying a little more.

‘Lame for a time, sir, please, sir; and then better for a time, sir; and then lame again, somehow.’

‘Pick the foot up.’

Long scrutiny is given to the foot when the picking up has been done; more long scrutiny is given to it by the pupils when the Professor, seeming to have mastered the case, calls them to note the points of it. And then Larry is ordered to lead the little creature for that experimental walk that shall let the exact manner and manifestation of the lameness be ascertained.

‘Do you observe?’ says the Professor, putting his own shoulders momentarily stiff and awry, the better to illustrate how the poor pony’s limbs, in the distance, can be seen to be stiff and awry. And then he says louder, ‘That’ll do,’ Larry’s signal to lead the little creature back again.

‘It is here,’ says the Professor, giving his verdict at last, not without having tried the knowledge of a student, or shown him how knowledge could be obtained. ‘Here, and there. Both hocks are diseased. So, do you, please, Mr. Progressor, fire the fetlock. Let it be done at once. Take all the dirt out thoroughly. And then give a blister. You’—turning to the boy—‘oh, yes, here you are; the pony must rest, mind. You must let it lie by, thoroughly lie by. You understand?—Next case.’

One was an old number; that meaning one already on the gratis list, which the Professor (or one of his colleagues) had seen on another afternoon. One was an open sore, which was to have a poultice. One was exhaustion again; the owner begging pardon, and with his hand up to his hat, asking if medicine could



be given that could be mixed amongst the creature's corn, since it was so very hard, it was, to give it physic that was drink; the owner, moreover, being accommodated instantly, since the Professor, prompt to recognise these stable difficulties, and the individualities of his patients, ordered powders to be made up for it, in the place of a draught. Three were colds; all three from the same stables: some wretched squalid place, one may be sure, under the wretched squalid rooms that were the costermongers' homes, and that would let in weather, and keep in damp, and



be the habitation of rats, of mice, of smaller vermin, and of rheumatism and fevers unavoidable—stables in which, as the Professor knew, no patients could recover properly, when once strength and stamina had been beaten down and disease had gained the victory, yet stables to which he would be forced to resign his patients, seeing that College funds are not available for atoning for landlords' parsimony, any more than human hospital funds are available for sweetening the homes of human pauper-patients.

The cases, in short, in all, amount perhaps to a dozen; the last being a dog, a beautiful, soft-haired, silky, black retriever, suffering from canker of the ear. The cases do not, as it chances, include a cat this particular afternoon, though cats are sometimes brought, it seems; women and girls being the 'owners,' who melt off into tears and other hysterical sorrows. The cases do not happen, either, to include donkeys, or sheep, or cattle, though the poor may bring these also if occasion should arise, still having the privilege of gratis advice for them, and of getting the medicine prescribed at the uniform low rate of a shilling. The two hours devoted to this humane work have run out, and there are no more animals waiting to be seen; the Professor, having his students before him, counsels them to take especial notice of some post-mortem subject they will find just ready for their examination, and they and he disperse, and go their several ways.

One way leads to where it is good to be permitted to follow. It is to the cleanly stalls (wards would be, perhaps, the more rightful name) wherein are the College patients proper; wherein are the animals that are not paupers, but residents, paid for by their masters—by yearly subscription as regards advice, by a fixed charge per night as regards board and lodging—and where they are nursed in all the perfection of curative and sanitary arrangements to which, up to this time, veterinary knowledge has arrived. Thus, these stalls are kept at the temperature each case requires. Also, they are spacious; they are kept free from draughts, and beautifully clean, with scarcely a straw awry; and at the door of each, unless a horse has succeeded in biting or worrying it away, there is a card, in ordinary hospital fashion, describing the patient, its disease, its treatment, its diet, and the day on which it was sent in. Here, in this stall for example, the nearest to the yard (on the Old St. Pancras side of the building), where the gratis patients have been seen, is a poor horse with lock-jaw. Quiet is essential to it—dead quiet; so the windows of its stall are made blank by matting, and the door is padlocked to keep out unnecessary visitors, and suffer it only to be disturbed when the Professors in charge permit. The afflicted patient is standing; he has his whole body stone-like, without a bend or rest; its face is piteously vacant; its eyes so quenched and uninterested it might be blind. When a kind hand just strokes its nose gently, it gives no response; indeed, it might be an inanimate creature. Yet there is fair hope that it may recover, poor thing.

For, leaving it quietly and turning the key of a second door, here is another horse, with lock-jaw also, which a few days ago was in as sorry a plight as the first, but which is now by very slow degrees recovering; and if skilful treatment has worked its way on this, why may it not work its way upon the other? Very touching is this second poor invalid, too, in its sadness, and in its manifestation of slight bettering. It, too, has the stiff attitude, but it seems to relish the momentary light and companionship the opening of its door affords; it unfastens its mouth a faint inch or two at the soothing touch it feels; it can even go so far as to droop its tongue out a little way moistly; grateful, so it would appear, to have that much of its lost power returning to it, and glad to show that it has gone that far on the road to mend.

Securing its door again and going away, we find a horse which was operated upon only three or four hours ago. The operation was merely the probing of a cyst or abscess, so it has left but little distress; and but that the practised eye of the operator detects somewhat more suppuration now than was expected, the creature looks as sleek and as contented as if it had been in clover under the hands of its own pet groom. His neighbour has a bandaged leg. It has been hurt in a carriage accident, and will stay here till its wound is healed. This other bandaged leg, in a stall opposite, received the laceration for which the bandage is there, in the hunting-field. This pretty, pert, black animal, smooth, fine, with its bright eyes on the alert at a visit being paid to it, and its tall, thin ears quick to rise and fall as if in rapid questioning, is so much the better, clearly, of any malady which might have brought him here, that he will be ready to be restored to his owner, and may be slipping glibly over miles and miles of breezy turf and soft green upland before many days are over.

Here is a poor horse slung; by a cloth under its body, hung to straps and chains. The injuries from which it is suffering prevent it supporting itself, so this cloth gently holds it, yet holds it in a position that will let all its four feet or any of them touch the ground whenever it wishes—the thorough suspension of a horse being prohibited, it seems, by its nervous temperament; under penalty, that is, at least, of producing excitement, as certain to be as ruinous to usefulness and health as any injury for which slinging would be prescribed. A horse is seen next with paralysis of the lip; another with rheumatism; another with sore throat; plenty have cold and fever, and all varieties of diseases of the

respiratory organs ; these, together with lameness among the pauper patients, and setting aside the contagious pests and plagues every now and then epidemic, being the disorders for which veterinary skill, in the ordinary work of towns, is most frequently required. Altogether, here is accommodation for a hundred sick horses, or for bullocks, oxen, camels, elephants—special accommodation too for a score or more of dogs. They are on a floor above, and have nice clean compartments, boarded and railed off, and a bath, and a railed place, extra high and secure, for any suffering from rabies ; and a cooking-place, in which at this moment the *chef* is attending to hot boiled bullock's heart, chopping it up for those patients for whom no more especial sick diet has been ordered. Then, in addition to these stalls and wards, there are other places within these College walls which testify to the wide area that veterinary practice now embraces, and to the humane principles it inculcates and requires. There is the horses' vapour-bath. There are the other baths—the douche, the hot, the cold. There is the operating-bed—a clean floor of straw, softly bottomed, with a gallery round it, from which students can see all that is going on. There is the operating-pen—a simple barriered place to surround horses which need not lie down, but can be belted and buckled in, to receive their benefit quietly as they stand. There are the storing-places for the beef tea, the port wine, the gruel, the gin, the milk, that form the sick fare for the horses at special times. There is the post-mortem house. There is the dissecting-room. There is the museum, with such skeletons as the ostrich, the elephant, the ox, dog, pig, sheep, tiger, calf, as well as the man, for comparison, and, of course, the horse. There is the dispensary, a compact little chemist's shop of drugs. There is the instrument-room, suggesting, in its prim and trim glass cases, that it is merely a collection of unusual cutlery. There is the students' library. There is the lecture-hall, or theatre, where at one side are great doors wide enough to admit a sick horse bodily, for students to have a practical lesson on it upon the spot, as well as lessons by diagram or speech. There is, with marked benefit coming from it, the forge ; in it shoeing is taught, shoeing is done ; every young veterinary student being required to know how to shoe horses with his own hand, and every horse-patient being unshod periodically, lest its feet should be getting sore or tender, or some discomfort or deformity should be entailed. There is (over and above all the other offices that are imperative) the governors' board-

room, with a small engraving hanging in it of Vial de Saint Bel, that famous French veterinary surgeon who left his own country, during the Revolution, to teach his art in England; where, till he came, veterinary surgery was unknown. And there is—across there, open on this side of it, yet roofed in—the fine long exercise piece, with strawed floor, with padded ends (that no harm may come from too sudden turning), which is not only used to give convalescent horses gentle walking, or the quicker pace to which they may be coaxed when their progress warrants it, but to test the wind of strange horses sent here by subscribers to see if they are fit to buy. All such horses, it may be mentioned, make an application (through their best friend) for a diploma; and it is given to them after they have passed physical tests as severe in their way as the mental ordeals which test young men who are students at the College. And with both sorts of examinations, if the answers come satisfactorily, the same end is gained. It is a Pass.

An infinity of interesting—nay, fascinating—detail reveals itself in veterinary surgery, of course, the more veterinary surgery is seen. It is a theme of itself, however, and cannot be touched now. Some Sick Poor are being led away from the Royal Veterinary College; let us pass out of the gates with them, and say no more.

## THE FRENCH NEWSPAPER PRESS.

### IN TWO PARTS

#### I.

THE modern French newspaper press has been modelled after three types,—the old-fashioned press of the Restoration, that golden age of the French press when the journal was a standard and the journalist the soldier of an idea; the mercantile press, conceived by Emile de Girardin; and the gossipy journal, the *petite presse* of the Second Empire, of which the inventor was Hippolyte de Villemessant. Every feature of the French newspapers of the present day will be found more or less developed in these three types, which represent the history of the newspaper press in France since the fall of the First Napoleon.

The old-fashioned French press, of which honourable representatives still exist in the 'Journal des Débats,' the 'Constitutionnel,' and the 'Siècle,' partook rather of the nature of a review than of a newspaper. It discussed matters learnedly, scientifically, and at any rate with an irreproachable gravity which had the pretension of teaching rather than of amusing. Its academic form rendered it not easily accessible, and the small number of its readers proved the narrow limits of its influence. Nevertheless the old-fashioned press had its wits and writers *à la mode*, but they appealed only to a certain section of society—the lettered middle classes, the *bourgeoisie lettrée*.

In introducing cheap periodical literature into France, Emile de Girardin caused a revolution in journalism. Previously to 1836, the year when he founded 'La Presse,' French newspapers had depended for their income almost entirely on the subscriptions, which varied from 80 fr. to 120 fr. a year. They were little sheets, containing a comparatively small amount of text, having only a small circulation, and consequently but few advertisements. The two great journals of the day, for instance, the 'Journal des Débats' and the 'Gazette de France,' had from eight to ten thousand subscribers, and about 200,000 fr. to 250,000 fr. worth of advertisements a year. Emile de Girardin, who was essentially a



keen business man, struck by the success that had been obtained in England by cheap publications like the 'Penny Magazine,' determined to introduce the system into France. He tried the experiment first of all with the 'Journal des Connaissances Utiles,' the subscription to which was 4 fr. a year, and which at the end of the first twelvemonth had a circulation of 230,000—a success then unparalleled in France. 'La Presse' was a large four-page daily paper, issued at 40 fr. a year. The principle on which 'La Presse' was founded was that the value of the advertising columns of any publication depends on the number of its readers. The chief object of the publisher was therefore to secure the greatest possible number of readers. The methods adopted by De Girardin for attaining this end were the cheapness of the price of the journal, extensive advertising, which soon won him the nickname of the *Homme-Annonce* and the *Homme-Affiche*, and, above all, the invention of the *roman-feuilleton*, the novel cut up into daily slices, 'to be continued in our next.' The *feuilleton* brought thousands of readers, for whom mere political, economical, or literary questions had no interest. Besides, at that time newspaper reading was not popular; news travelled slowly, and people were not in a hurry to receive it. The *roman-feuilleton* was a bait, and especially a bait for the women; and it is a rule in journalism of all countries that success is impossible unless the suffrages of the women be secured.

The women took this new bait greedily, and in the latter part of the reign of Louis Philippe the serial novel had an immense vogue. The *roman-feuilleton* was, indeed, the *raison d'être* of the journal itself. Hence sprang the reputation of the elder Dumas, of Eugène Sue, of Paul Féval, of Elie Berthet, and others. Even the grave old-fashioned journals, after having first disdained this means of acquiring fortune, were obliged at last to have recourse to it. The 'Journal des Débats' and the 'Constitutionnel' recovered their declining influence thanks to the socialistic novels of Eugène Sue, for whose 'Wandering Jew' the latter journal paid 100,000 fr. *A propos* of Sue's 'Mysteries of Paris,' published as a *feuilleton* in 1844, Théophile Gautier said: 'For more than a year all France has busied itself with the adventures of Prince Rudolf before attending to its own affairs. The sick have retarded their decease in order to wait for the end of the "Mysteries of Paris;" the magic "to be continued to-morrow" carried them along from day to day, and death comprehended that they would

never be at peace in the other world until they knew the *dénouement* of that strange *épopée*.'

This was the time when Alexandre Dumas hired himself to MM. de Girardin and Véron for the sum of 64,000 fr. a year, and undertook at the same time to supply the 'Siècle' with a hundred thousand lines of copy a year at the rate of 1fr. 50c. a line.

By means of the sovereign attraction of the *roman-feuilleton*, 'La Presse' obtained a circulation of 10,000 copies at the end of two months, and of 20,000 at the end of two years. The rival journal, 'Le Siècle,' subsequently reached 38,000, a figure then unprecedented. The publicity thus acquired was made a source of revenue, not only by means of advertisements, but also by *réclames*, or 'puffs,' inserted in the reading matter. The *réclame* had been invented by De Villemessant, who was then struggling to the front with a little fashion journal, 'La Sylphide,' and it was at his suggestion that 'La Presse' carried out the idea on a grand scale.

The mercantile press thus established—the joint-stock journal with dividends—was a purely commercial speculation. In it the idea was subordinated to the advertising columns. It was a degradation of the press in this respect, that the mercantile journal ceased to direct or instruct the reader. It became the tributary of the crowd which demanded each day to be amused. All that had formerly constituted a journal, the discussion of public affairs, the development of party principle, the discussion of men and things, was considered to be of secondary importance from the point of view of success. Even literary criticism was turned out of doors; the farmer of the advertising columns protested against the admission of independent judgments, and required the insertion of *réclames* that were paid for at so much a line. The new press was justly reproached with having transformed into a vulgar traffic what was formerly a mission, a *sacerdoce*.

The further development of the mercantile press was brusquely arrested by the political changes that took place after 1848, and while in the dozen daily political papers that were tolerated by the Empire at first, the tradition of the main features introduced into journalism of the cheap press was perpetuated, there came into existence a new type of journal, which deserves somewhat careful consideration, the more so as almost every prominent journalist of the present day has served his apprenticeship in this school. This new type of journalism used to be known as the *petite presse*. The model organs were the weekly 'Figaro,' founded by De Ville-

messant in 1854, and a daily literary newspaper, 'L'Événement,' founded also by De Villemessant in 1865. This latter journal was suppressed at the end of 1866, and immediately replaced by the daily 'Figaro,' which shortly afterwards obtained the authorisation to treat of political matters, and which still continues to be one of the most typical and most flourishing of Parisian newspapers. But the 'Figaro,' it must be remembered, began as a *petit journal*, and up to the present day it has, with its imitators and rivals, maintained the leading characteristics and much of the spirit of the so-called *petite presse* of the Second Empire.

In 1852 the state of the public mind in France had undergone a profound change. The *coup d'état* had put an end to the wars of thought, of eloquence, and of ambition, to the debates of political, artistic, and literary parties, to the rivalry of *cénacles* and assemblies. The mind of the nation was kept in a state of enforced inactivity. But although the victory of the new power prohibited public opinion from scaling the heights of storm and discussion, it could not prevent the public mind from taking refuge in curiosity. Public life was walled in; private life was thrown open. And so the whole attention and existence of the public, and particularly of the public of the capital, became absorbed in tittle-tattle, gossip, scandal, calumny, anecdotes, personalities, the servile war of petty envy. The green-room, the boudoir, and the alcove were the fields in which the journalists sought their harvest, and as long as they remained within these limits they ran no risk of giving umbrage to the powers that were. The *petite presse* was to journalism what the Offenbachian operetta was to music—the negation of all that is noble, lovely, or great, the triumph of scepticism, the ironical vengeance of disabused worldlings. The minor press avenged the public on its fallen gods, and systematically desecrated the objects of its admiration. The method of the journalists of the *petite presse* consisted in magnifying everything that is trivial and diminishing everything great. The scoffing and smart jeering of the weekly 'Figaro' and of its contemporaries; that Rabelaisian laughter which hailed the smallest triumph; that weekly scarification of talent or of legitimate pride; those bitter attacks upon too-persistent popularity, regaled Imperial Paris with the joys of Rome, with the satisfaction of ostracism, and with the delights of the antique circus. The *petite presse* appealed to the most wretched passions of the lower middle classes; it gave a voice and an arm to the

impatience with which those classes witnessed the inequality of individuals before intelligence and renown.

We may be permitted to dwell upon the characteristics of the Imperial press at some length, because nearly every criticism that may be made upon it is applicable to some of the most prominent French journals of the present day. As has been already stated, most of the leading journalists of to-day are men who began their career under the Empire and in the *petite presse*. And in tracing the history of the origins of the modern French press we must not neglect a point which has been admirably developed by MM. de Goncourt in their novel 'Charles Demailly,' a book which gives a vivid picture of the ways and manners of newspaper men under the Empire. This point is the entrance of a new element into literature, the Bohemian element, which helped not a little the fortune of the *petit journal*. The Bohemians, whose poet was Henri Murger, were a new race of intellectuals, without ancestors, and free from all taint of education or tradition. The Bohemians did not enter the career of art or letters on the same conditions as the former generation, the men of 1830, almost all of whom belonged to the well-to-do middle classes. The Bohemians sprang from nobody knows where, and brought with them terrible needs in the pursuit of their ambition. In them the *petite presse* found men ready-drilled, a trained army—one of those terrible, naked, bare-footed, badly fed armies that fight over their rations. Starvation, bitterness, the haughty indifference of success, the fireless hearth, the manuscript that the publisher disdains, the frequent visits to the pawnshop, the crying debts, all this to be avenged, and everything to be gained, made the Bohemians enter the career of minor journalism as if they were mounting to the assault of an abhorred and oppressive society and, as it were, with an echo of the cry of 1848: '*A bas les gants! Down with the kid-gloves!*'

From an Anglo-Saxon point of view, the *petite presse* of the Empire might be characterised as a scandalous and unprincipled institution. Nevertheless, circumstances enabled it to become all that it wished to be—a success, a fashion, a tyranny, an excellent business enterprise. The minor journal was read everywhere, in Paris and in the provinces, and before it all trembled—the author for his book, the musician for his opera, the painter for his picture, the sculptor for his statue, the vaudevillist for his wit, the theatrical manager for his receipts, the actress for her youth, the rich man for his sleep.

But even more disastrous than this tyranny was the degradation of the intellectual level of the public which the minor press produced. It put an end to that development of taste which the preceding generation had begun. The literary movement of 1830 had made of France a great public. The country of Boileau and Voltaire had broadened its taste and genius. Escaping from the idolatries of tradition, it had translated Shakespeare, and learned to live in a heavenly Jerusalem of poetry, lyricism, and imagination. The flippant press of the Empire lowered this intellectual level, degraded the public, and degraded literature itself by its ignoble chattering, its Mephistophelean wit, its irony that respected nothing.

But enough of general considerations: let us return to practical details and continue our examination of the type of journal conceived by Villemessant. The old weekly 'Figaro,' in which the principal writers were Auguste Villemot, Edmond About, Théodore de Banville, Sarcey, Jules Noriac, Scholl, Henri de Pène, Charles Monselet, was a violent literary pamphlet whose editors were required to handle the rapier as deftly as the pen. On the other hand, while aiming principally at a scandalous notoriety, De Villemessant was the first man in France to comprehend a newspaper as a newspaper; he appreciated the value of news rapidly if not surely obtained; but at the same time, knowing the nature of his public, so indifferent to everything outside of their own country, De Villemessant used to lay down the principle that a dog run over on the Boulevard des Italiens interested the French reader far more than a regicide committed at St. Petersburg or Berlin. It is, indeed, on this principle that most Parisian newspapers are still conducted. With these ideas, when the 'Figaro' became a daily political paper, De Villemessant still contrived to make it above all a newspaper within the limits of his Parisian acceptance of that term. The principal writers in the 'Figaro' before 1870 were Albert Wolff, Henri Rochefort, Adrien Marx, F. Magnard, and Saint-Genest. With the exception of Rochefort, all these gentlemen are still the ornaments of the 'Figaro.' As for the writers of the old weekly 'Figaro,' their names are to be found here and there in the leading journals of the present day, and, in fact, there is hardly a prominent journalist, with the exception of purely political writers, who has not at one time or another written for the 'Figaro' and been an apprentice under De Villemessant. Moreover, so completely does the 'Figaro,' as developed by De

Villemeussant, fulfil the requirements of the French reader, that all the great political journals have been obliged to conform more or less to the model of their vivacious contemporary.

The 'Figaro' consists of four pages, each of six columns, printed in long-primer and bourgeois type, with plenty of 'whites' and 'leads.' Sixteen to eighteen of the columns are devoted to reading matter, and the rest to advertisements. The first page starts off with a political bulletin, or a *chronique* of two or three columns; then follow 'Echoes of Paris,' or some equivalent title, containing personal notes, news items, and society or other notes, and 'puffs.' After this come the 'nouvelles à la main,' three or four jokes, piquant anecdotes, or *bons-mots*. This department is to be found in the earliest French journals, even in the 'Mercure de France,' during the most stirring days of the Revolution of 1789; and it was brought to a high state of perfection by the mischievous *petite presse* of the Empire. After the funny department follows a society article, in which is discussed the social topic of the day, the marriages, the funerals, the fêtes of high life and would-be high life. After these special and invariable features follow short articles on current events, parliamentary reports, cuttings from the French papers and two or three insignificant items from the half-dozen English and German newspapers that compose 'the foreign press' in the eyes of the average French journalist; various local news; law reports; telegrams and correspondence, a meagre column filled up by the telegraphic agencies; the Bourse, a financial report furnished by some banking establishment; theatrical reports and news; sporting, and then on the last column of the third page, and generally on the whole of the fourth page, advertisements. Finally, one-third of the second page is taken up by the *roman-feuilleton*. Such, with slight modifications, is the plan of the contents of the majority of the daily political newspapers that have yet appeared in France. In some papers political discussion takes up the lion's share of the space on the first page; in others, greater attention is given to less serious topics, but in all the main features, the *chronique*, the 'nouvelles à la main,' the 'faits divers,' the law reports, and the theatrical record, the same model is universally followed.

'Le Temps' and the 'République Française' may be taken as types of serious political and general newspapers, as distinguished from the lighter boulevard journals and the skirmishing party organs like Rochefort's 'Intransigeant' or Dr. Clémenceau's 'Jus-



tice.' 'Le Temps,' like all the French journals, has only four pages, but the sheet is much larger than the sheet of the 'Figaro,' the columns wider and longer, and the typographical appearance altogether more solid and business-like. It is a Protestant and Moderate Republican organ, very serious in tone, and incapable of such freaks as jokes, *bons-mots*, or 'nouvelles à la main.' The general plan of this journal is as follows: First page, bulletin or abstract of the home and foreign news of the day; telegrams, short but excellent; three or four well-written leading articles on French and foreign affairs; correspondence; *feuilleton*; on Sunday the *feuilleton* is occupied by M. Francisque Sarcey's review of the dramatic week, on Monday by M. Weber's musical article, on Tuesday by a scientific record, and on the other days of the week by a story. 'Le Temps' affects translations of English novels, as being of a higher moral tone and more in harmony with its Protestant principles than most of the works of contemporary French writers. Bret Harte, Mark Twain, Hawthorne, Mrs. Gaskell, Miss Braddon, Wilkie Collins, Rhoda Broughton, Henry James, &c., have seen many of their works translated in this journal. Second page—detailed analysis of foreign news; a *chronique*, in which M. Jules Clarétie discusses the artistic, literary, or social topics of the day; 'news of the day,' 'miscellaneous items,' 'parliamentary report,' &c. The third page is generally taken up by 'variétés'—a literary, social, or philosophical study, or literary miscellany, signed by Schérer, Jules Soury, Renan, Taine, and other eminent writers. The odd corner is filled up with law and commercial reports, theatrical items, &c. The fourth page is devoted to advertisements and to the latest news items and telegrams, thrown in at the foot of the page as a *feuilleton* on going to press, 'Le Temps,' being an afternoon paper, appearing about half-past four. 'Le Temps' is on the whole the best informed, the best conducted, and the best written of all the French journals, though not perhaps the most amusing or the most characteristically French. It is the organ of the higher middle classes. With the exception of the *chronique*, the *feuilleton*, and the 'variétés,' the articles in 'Le Temps' are anonymous. The same is the case with the 'République Française,' and with a few other journals, so far as concerns the leading articles.

The third type of journal that we have to consider is the small folio sheet sold at five centimes, the popular journal, of which the model is 'Le Petit Journal,' which has a daily circulation of

650,000 copies. Everything in the popular journal is brief, and yet, strange to say, nearly one third of the whole space is devoted to serial fiction. The 'Petit Journal' publishes daily instalments of two sensational novels at the foot of the first, second, and third pages, a leading article on some political or social topic, concise parliamentary and legal reports, telegraphic news, provincial news, a list of public amusements, theatrical news, &c. The fourth page is always occupied by advertisements. The 'Petit Journal,' and most of the journals of the same type, are excellently edited. It was under the management of the late Emile de Girardin that the 'Petit Journal' attained its enormous circulation; and since 1873, when he reorganised it, this little sheet has caused the elementary notions of political life to penetrate into the remotest parts of France. There is no exaggeration in saying that the 'Petit Journal' has contributed more than all the other French journals put together to secure the establishment of the present French Republic.

In order the better to appreciate the excellences and the shortcomings of the French newspaper press, we will briefly examine the characteristics of the several departments, beginning with one of the most interesting, the *chronique*, or 'Courrier de Paris.'

The *chronique* has no equivalent in English journalism; like *mémoires* and *causerie*, it is something peculiarly French. The Anglo-Saxon genius lends itself with difficulty to the light and genial and witty train of thought which the *chronique* requires. Our blows have a tendency to be too heavy, and our laughter too coarse. The bludgeon is an excellent weapon, but it lacks the grace and elegance of the rapier. Moreover, it must be admitted that since the eighteenth century the conditions necessary for the existence of the *chronique* have been wanting in England, while in America they have never been known. These conditions are the life of a capital, the existence of a community within a community, what used to be called in England in the last century 'the town,' and which is still called in Paris, 'le tout Paris.' In London, owing to the immense increase in the size of the place, and owing to the practical suppression of social castes in an equality of dress, of wealth, of manners, 'the town' has ceased to have a distinct existence; it has become lost in the colossal uniformity of the great city, and with its disappearance has vanished also the comedy of 'the town,' the comedy of Wycherley, Congreve,

Sheridan, and Colman. In Paris, on the contrary, 'the town' still exists, although even there the tide of cosmopolitanism and democracy is rapidly rising and threatening it with destruction. Hitherto, however, the boulevard, the life of the boulevards, the manners and usages and eccentricities of the social agglomeration known as 'tout Paris,' have furnished a rich field for the observation of the chronicler and of his colleagues in anecdotic history, the vaudevillist and the playwright. Paris still has a comedy of 'the town,' and it is in this comedy and in the *chronique* that we find French *esprit* still hale and hearty.

The introduction of the *chronique* into the modern French journal dates from the time of the old 'Presse,' for which, between the years 1836 to 1848, under the pseudonym of the 'Vicomte de Launay,' Madame de Girardin (Delphine Gay) wrote that famous 'Courrier de Paris,' which has served as a model to so many imitators, from Auguste Villemot to Jules Clarétie. For more than ten years Madame de Girardin continued to observe and describe her epoch week by week, with its manners, its fashions, its peculiarities of language, its enthusiasms, its follies, its fêtes, its balls, its gossip, its scandal. How many of these details, in appearance so frivolous, have already become historical! What an inexhaustible mine of facts for the novelists and historians of the future who wish to reconstruct a picture of French society of that epoch! And since then how many brilliant pages have been written in the service of the *chronique*! With what delight the next generation will turn back to the two volumes of *chroniques* that Auguste Villemot wrote for the old 'Figaro,' and to the smart and ingenious anecdotes and observations of Edmond About, Henri de Pène, Rochefort, Jules Lecomte, Janin, Charles Monselet, Scholl, Jules Clarétie, Albert Wolff, and of the young men who are now winning their spurs in the press? Even Taine did not disdain to contribute a *chronique* to 'La Vie Parisienne,' and his articles have been collected into a curious volume called 'La Vie et les Opinions de Thomas Graindorge.'

The weekly literary and dramatic *feuilleton*, in which Sainte-Beuve, Théophile Gautier, Jules Janin, and Paul de Saint-Victor used to make and destroy reputations, at the same time that they established their own, is now a diminished but not a fallen power. At present the public are too eager for news to wait until the end of the week for an account of the new play or the new book. With a few exceptions, then, the French journals have abolished

this *feuilleton*, and the critics pass judgment on the piece the morning after the first performance. The importance attached to theatrical affairs of late years is remarkable, and each journal of the type of the 'Figaro' has three editors, who are charged with informing the public as to the great and small events that take place before and behind the curtain in the score theatres with which the Parisians are provided. There is first of all the regular dramatic or musical critic who furnishes an account and criticism of the new piece; then there is the editor who day by day relates the anecdotic history of the Parisian evening, a kind of theatrical *chronique*, created in the 'Figaro' some six or seven years ago by M. Arnold Mortier, and sustained day by day with a display of *verve*, wit, and ingenuity that is truly remarkable; and, finally, an editor charged with the theatrical *courrier* consisting of minor theatrical notes and news. The relations between the newspapers and the theatrical managers are not those of independence. In France anonymous journalism is the exception, and, as a rule, all articles are signed either with a real name or a pseudonym, of which the secret belongs to M. Tout le Monde. Moreover, besides being worldlings who seek rather than avoid public and social notoriety, the French journalists are as often as not playwrights and novelists as well as journalists and critics. They have their entries to the theatres, and their demands for boxes and free seats are, as a rule, far from modest. In return for these favours the theatrical managers expect the insertion of 'puffs' and other interested notes gratis, and it has become the custom of the Parisian press to accept this obligation, which reduces the advertising expenses of Parisian theatres to zero, at least so far as the newspapers are concerned. This is one of the bad consequences of the admission of 'puffs' amongst reading matter, a thing no good English or American editor would think of doing. Then, again, perfect independence of judgment is interfered with by considerations of good-fellowship, by the desire not to offend colleagues, or managers, whose influence or whose good graces may be needed some day or other. The question of *camaraderie* has a very serious influence on this as on nearly every other department of the French newspaper. The tendency is towards excessive benevolence or excessive severity, sugared friendliness or ferocious enmity. In some of the more serious journals like 'Le Temps,' or the 'Journal des Débats,' the dramatic critic writes only once a week; the *chronique* of the Parisian evening is suppressed, but the theatrical

gossip and puffs, together with the summary programmes of the theatres, are published daily gratis. In short, where the insincerity or corruption, direct or indirect, begins and ends it would be hard to say. The 'puffing' of a new piece has even been reduced to a regular system of anticipatory and contemporaneous *réclame*, of which the following are the usual progressive stages. First of all, before the work is begun, the author is announced to be putting the finishing touches to a comedy or drama for such and such a theatre; then the piece is falsely announced to have been accepted at half-a-dozen other theatres successively (this stage is of no use to the author except that it causes his name and the title of his piece to be printed in all the newspapers of France and of Navarre); then follow the announcement of the true acceptance of the piece, the date at which it is likely to be produced, the names of the actors engaged to play in it, the reading of the piece to the actors with immense success, the final cast, gossip from behind the scenes, troubles of the author on account of the interference of the censorship, list of the provincial theatres which have bought the right to play the piece, no places to be had for the 'first night,' the dress rehearsal and its emotions, description of the dressing-room of the 'star' actress, account of her life and adventures, her charity, her poodle-dog, her hôtel in the Rue de Monceau, the perfume she uses for her bath, &c., and then a multitude of *potins*, letters from indignant rivals, newspaper polemics, the house 'full to suffocation,' *bons-mots* of the 'lucky author of —', the comedy which is now having such an unprecedented success at the Folies-Amoureuses, and so on, until the announcement of the supper given in commemoration of the hundredth performance, the description of that supper, and the final announcements of the 'last nights.' This rage of *réclame* is a veritable curse to the French newspaper and periodical press. The French journalists would perhaps do wisely in carrying into execution the dictum of old Boileau, who said of dramatic criticism:—

C'est un droit qu'à la porte on achète en entrant.

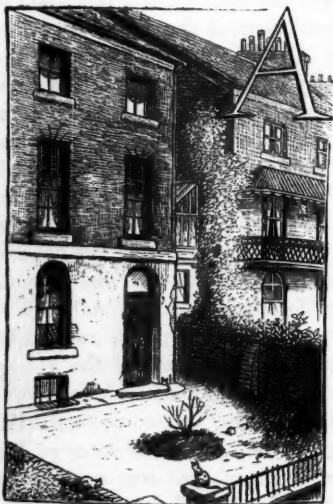
## THE GIANT'S ROBE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'VICE VERSA.'

'Now does he feel his title  
Hang loose upon him, like a giant's robe  
Upon a dwarfish thief.'—*Macbeth*.

### CHAPTER IV.

#### MALAKOFF TERRACE.



AFTER parting from Vincent at the end of Rotten Row, Mark Ashburn continued his walk alone through Kensington High Street and onwards, until he came to one of those quiet streets which serve as a sort of backwater to the main stream of traffic, and, turning down this, it was not long before he reached a row of small three-story houses, with their lower parts cased in stucco, but the rest allowed to remain in the original yellow-brown brick, which time had mellowed to a pleasant warm tone. 'Malakoff Terrace,' as the place had been

christened (and the title was a tolerable index of its date), was rather less depressing in appearance than many of its more modern neighbours, with their dismal monotony and pretentiousness. It faced a well-kept enclosure, with trim lawns and beds, and across the compact laurel hedges in the little front gardens a curious passer-by might catch glimpses of various interiors which in nearly every case left him with an impression of cosy comfort. The outline of the terrace was broken here and there by little verandahs protecting the shallow balconies and painted a deep Indian-red or sap-green, which in summer-time were gay with



flowers and creepers, and one seldom passed there then on warm and drowsy afternoons without undergoing a well sustained fire from quite a masked battery of pianos, served from behind the fluttering white curtains at most of the long open windows on the first floor.

Even in winter and at night the terrace was cheerful, with its variety of striped and coloured blinds and curtains at the illuminated windows; and where blinds and curtains were undrawn and the little front rooms left unlighted, the firelight flickering within on shining bookcases and picture-frames was no less pleasantly suggestive. Still, in every neighbourhood there will always be some houses whose exteriors are severely unattractive; without being poverty-stricken, they seem to belong to people indifferent to all but the absolutely essential, and incapable of surrounding themselves with any of the characteristic contrivances that most homes which are more than mere lodgings amass almost unconsciously. It was before a house of this latter kind that Mark stopped—a house with nothing in the shape of a verandah to relieve its formality. Behind its front railings there were no trim laurel bushes—only an uncomfortable bed of equal parts of mould and broken red tiles, in which a withered juniper was dying hard; at the windows were no bright curtain-folds or hanging baskets of trailing fern to give a touch of colour, but dusty wire blinds and hangings of a faded drab.

It was not a boarding-house, but the home in which Mark Ashburn lived with his family, who, if they were not precisely gay, were as respectable as any in the terrace, which is better in some respects than mere gaiety.

He found them all sitting down to dinner in the back parlour, a square little room with a grey paper of a large and hideous design. His mother, a stout lady with a frosty complexion, a cold grey eye, and an injured expression about the mouth and brow, was serving out soup with a touch of the relieving officer in her manner; opposite to her was her husband, a mild little man in habitually low spirits; and the rest of the family, Mark's two sisters, Martha and Trixie, and his younger brother, Cuthbert, were in their respective places.

Mrs. Ashburn looked up severely as he came in. 'You are late again, Mark,' she said; 'while you are under this roof' (Mrs. Ashburn was fond of referring to the roof) 'your father and I expect you to conform to the rules of the house.'

'Well, you see, mother,' explained Mark, sitting down and unfolding his napkin, 'it was a fine afternoon, so I thought I would walk home with a friend.'

'There is a time for walking home with a friend, and a time for dinner,' observed his mother, with the air of quoting something Scriptural.

'And I've mixed them, mother? So I have; I'm sorry, and I won't do it again. There, will that do?'

'Make haste and eat your soup, Mark, and don't keep us all waiting for you.'

Mrs. Ashburn had never quite realised that her family had grown up. She still talked to Mark as she had done when he was a careless schoolboy at St. Peter's; she still tried to enforce little moral lessons and even petty restrictions upon her family generally; and though she had been long reduced to blank cartridges, it worried them.

The ideal family circle, on reassembling at the close of the day, celebrate their reunion with an increasing flow of lively conversation: those who have been out into the great world describe their personal experiences, and the scenes, tragic or humorous, which they have severally witnessed during the day; and when these are exhausted, the female members take up the tale and relate the humbler incidents of domestic life, and so the hours pass till bedtime.

Such circles are in all sincerity to be congratulated; but it is to be feared that in the majority of cases the conversation of a family whose members meet every day is apt, among themselves, to become frightfully monosyllabic. It was certainly so with the Ashburns. Mark and Trixie sometimes felt the silences too oppressive to be borne, and made desperate attempts at establishing a general discussion on something or anything; but it was difficult to select a topic that could not be brought down by an axiom from Mrs. Ashburn which disposed of the whole subject in very early infancy. Cuthbert generally came back from the office tired and somewhat sulky; Martha's temper was not to be depended upon of an evening; and Mr. Ashburn himself rarely contributed more than a heavy sigh to the common stock of conversation.

Under these circumstances it will be readily believed that Mark's 'Evenings at Home' were by no means brilliant. He sometimes wondered himself why he had borne them so long; and if he had been able to procure comfortable lodgings at as

cheap a rate as it cost him to live at home, he would probably have taken an early opportunity of bursting the bonds of the family dulness. But his salary was not large, his habits were expensive, and he stayed on.

The beginning of this particular evening did not promise any marked increase in the general liveliness. Mrs. Ashburn announced lugubriously to all whom it might concern that she had eaten no lunch; Martha mentioned that a Miss Hornblower had called that afternoon—which produced no sensation, though Cuthbert seemed for a moment inclined to ask who Miss Hornblower might happen to be, till he remembered in time that he really did not care, and saved himself the trouble. Then Trixie made a well-meant, but rather too obvious, effort to allure him to talk by an inquiry (which had become something of a formula) whether he had 'seen any one' that day, to which Cuthbert replied that he had noticed one or two people hanging about the City; and Martha observed that she was glad to see he still kept up his jokes, moving him to confess sardonically that he knew he was a funny dog, but when he saw them all—and particularly Martha—rollicking round him, he could not help bubbling over with merriment himself.

Mrs. Ashburn caught the reply, and said severely: 'I do *not* think, Cuthbert, that either I or your father have ever set you the example of "rollicking," as you call it, at this table. Decent mirth and a cheerful tone of conversation we have always encouraged. I don't know why you should receive a mother's remarks with laughter. It is not respectful of you, Cuthbert, I must say!'

Mrs. Ashburn would probably have proceeded to further defend herself and family from the charge of rollicking, and to draw uncomplimentary parallels from the Proverbs between the laughter of certain persons and the crackling of thorns under a pot, when a timely diversion was effected by a sounding knock at the little front door. The maid put down the dish she was handing and vanished; after which there were sounds of a large body entering the passage, and a loud voice exclaiming, 'All in, hey? and at dinner, are they? Very well, my dear; tell 'em I'm here. I know my way in.'

'It's Uncle Solomon!' went round the table. They refrained from any outward expression of joy, because they were naturally a quiet family.

'Well,' said Mrs. Ashburn, who seemed to put her own construction on this reserve, 'and I'm sure if there is any table at which my only brother Solomon should be a welcome guest, it's *this* table.'

'Quite so, my dear; quite so,' said Mr. Ashburn, hastily. 'He was here last week; but we're all glad to see him at any time, I'm sure.'

'I hope so, indeed! Go in, Trixie, and help your uncle off with his coat,' for there were snorting and puffing signs from the next room, as if their relative were in difficulties; but before Trixie could rise the voice was heard again, 'That's it, Ann, thanky—you're called Ann, aren't you? I thought so. And how's the baker, Ann—wasn't it the baker I caught down the airy now? *wasn't* it, hey?'

And then a large red-faced person came in, with a puffy important mouth, a fringe of whiskers meeting under his chin, and what Trixie, in speaking privately of her relative's personal appearance, described as 'little piggy eyes,' which had, however, a twinkle of a rather primitive kind of humour in them.

Solomon Lightowler was a brother of Mrs. Ashburn's, a retired business man, who had amassed a considerable fortune in the hardware trade.

He was a widower and without children, and it was he who, fired with the ambition of having a nephew at one of the universities who should carry off the highest prizes and do credit to his uncle's perception, had sent Mark up to Trinity at his own expense, for Mr. Ashburn's position in the Inland Revenue Office would not have warranted such an outlay.

Mark's career at Cambridge, as has been said, had not been of a kind to reflect much distinction on his uncle, who, with the idea of having one more attempt to 'see his money back,' as he called it, and his powers of judgment in some degree verified, had then made Mark enter for the Indian Civil Service; after this also had ended in disaster, Uncle Solomon seemed at one time to have given him up in disgust, only reserving himself, as the sole value for his money, the liberty of reproach, and Mark was of opinion that he had already gone far towards recouping himself in this respect alone.

'Hah! phew—you're very hot in here!' he remarked, as an agreeable opening—he felt himself rich enough to be able to remark on other people's atmospheres; but Cuthbert expressed a

*sotto voce* wish that his uncle were exposed to an even higher temperature.

'We can't all live in country-houses, Solomon,' said his sister, 'and a small room soon gets warm to any one coming in from the cold air.'

'Warm!' said Mr. Lightowler, with a snort; 'I should think you must all of you be fired like a set of pots! I don't care where I sit, so long as I'm well away from the fire. I'll come by you, Trixie, eh—you'll take care of your uncle, won't you?'

Trixie was a handsome girl of about eighteen, with abundant auburn hair, which was never quite in good order, and pretty hands of which most girls would have been more careful; she had developed a limp taste for art of late, finding drawing outlines at an art school less irksome than assisting in the housekeeping at home. Uncle Solomon always alarmed her, because she never knew what he would say next; but as it was a family rule to be civil to him, she made room for him with great apparent alacrity.

'And how are you all, boys and girls, eh?' asked Uncle Solomon, when he was comfortably seated: 'Mark, you've got fuller in the waist of late; you don't take 'alf enough exercise. Cuthbert, lad, you're looking very sallow under the eyes—smoking and late hours, *that* is the way with all the young men nowadays! Why don't you talk to him, eh, Matthew? I should if he was a boy o' mine. Well, Martha, has any nice young man asked you to name a day yet?—he's a long time coming forward, Martha, that nice young man; why, let me see, Jane, she must be getting on now for—she was born in the year, fifty-four, was it?—four it was; it was in the war time, I remember, and you wanted her christened Alma, but I said an uncommon name is all very well if she grows up good-looking, but if she's plain it only sounds ridiklous; so, very fortunately as things turn out, you had her christened Martha. There's nothing to bite your lips over, my dear; no one blames you for it, we can't be all born 'andsome. It's Trixie here who gets all the love-letters, isn't it, Trixie?—ah, I *thought* I should see a blush if I looked! Who is it now, Trixie, and where do we meet him, and when is the wedding? Come, tell your old uncle.'

'Don't put such nonsense into the child's head, Solomon,' said his sister, in a slightly scandalised tone.

'That would be coals to Newcastle with a vengeance,' he

chuckled; 'but you mustn't mind my going on—that's my way; if people don't like it I can't help it, but I always speak right out.'

'Which is the reason we love him,' came in a stage aside from Cuthbert, who took advantage of a slight deafness in one of his uncle's ears.

'Well, Mr. Schoolmaster,' said the latter, working round to Mark again, 'and how are *you* gettin' on? If you'd worked harder at College and done me credit, you'd 'a' been a feller of your college, or a judge in an Indian court, by this time, instead of birching naughty little boys.'

'It's a detail,' said Mark; 'but I don't interfere in that department.'

'Well, you *are* young to be trusted with a birch. I'm glad they look at things that way. If *you're* satisfied with yourself, I suppose I ought to be, though I did look forward once to seeing a nephew of mine famous. You've 'ad all your fame at Cambridge, with your papers, and your poems, and your College skits—a nice snug little fame all to yourself.'

Martha tittered acidly at this light badinage, but it brought a pained look into Trixie's large brown eyes, who thought it was a shame that poor Mark should never be allowed to hear the last of his Cambridge *fiasco*.

Even Mrs. Ashburn seemed anxious to shield Mark. 'Ah, Solomon,' she said, 'Mark sees his folly now; he knows how wrong he was to spend his time in idle scribbling to amuse thoughtless young men, when he ought to have studied hard and shown his gratitude to you for all you have done for him.'

'Well, I've been a good friend to him, Jane, and I could have been a better if he'd proved deserving. I'm not one to grudge any expense. And if I thought, even now, that he'd really given up his scribbling——'

Mark thought it prudent to equivocate: 'Even if I wished to write, uncle,' he said, 'what with my school-work, and what with reading for the Bar, I should not have much time for it; but mother is right, I *do* see my folly now.'

This pleased Uncle Solomon, who still clung to the fragments of his belief in Mark's ability, and had been gratified upon his joining one of the Inns of Court by the prospect of having a nephew who at least would have the title of barrister; he relaxed at once: 'Well, well, let bygones be bygones, you may be a credit to me yet. And now I think of it, come down and stay Sunday



at "The Woodbines" soon, will you ; it'll be a rest for you, and I want you to see some of that 'Umpage's goings on at the church' (Uncle Solomon not unfrequently dropped an 'h,' but with a deliberation that seemed to say that he was quite aware it was there, but did not consider it advisable to recognise it just then). 'He's quite got round the Vicar ; made him have flowers and a great brass cross and candles on the Communion table, and 'Umpage all the time a feller with no more religion inside him than'—here he looked round the table for a comparison—'ah, than that jug has ! He's talked the Vicar into getting them little bags for collections now, all because he was jealous at the clerk's putting the plate inside my pew reg'lar for *me* to hold. It isn't that I care about 'olding a plate, but to see 'Umpage smirking round with one of them red velvet bags makes me downright sick—they'll drive me to go over and be a Baptist one of these fine days.'

'You don't like Mr. Humpage, do you, uncle ? ' said Trixie.

'Umpage and me are not friendly—though contiguous,' said he ; 'but as for liking, I neither like nor dislike the man ; we 'old no intercourse, beyond looking the other way in church and 'aving words across the fence when his fowls break through into my garden—he won't have the hole seen to, so I shall get it done myself and send the bill in to him—that's what *I* shall do.—A letter for you, Matthew ? read away, don't mind me,' for the maid had come in meanwhile with a letter, which Matthew Ashburn opened and began to read at this permission.

Presently he rubbed his forehead perplexedly : 'I can't make head or tail of it,' he said feebly ; 'I don't know who they are, or what they write all this to *me* for !'

'And it over to me, Matthew, let's see if *I* can make it any plainer for you,' said his brother-in-law, persuaded that to his powerful mind few things could long remain a mystery.

He took the letter, solemnly settled his double eye-glasses well down on his broad nose, coughed importantly, and began to read : 'Dear Sir,' he began in a tone of expounding wisdom—'well, that's straightforward enough—Dear Sir, We have given our best consideration to the—hey ! ' (here his face began to grow less confident) 'the sweet—what ?—ah, sweet bells, sweet bells jangled. What have you been jangling *your* bells about, eh, Matthew ?'

'I think they're mad !' said poor Mr. Ashburn ; 'the bells in this house are all right, I think, my dear ?'

'I'm not aware that any of them are out of order; they rehung the bell in the area the other day—it's some mistake,' said Mrs. Ashburn.

'Which,' continued Uncle Solomon, 'you 'ave been good enough to submit to us (pretty good that for a bell—'anger, hey?) We regret, however, to say that we do not find ourselves in a position to make any overtures to you in the matter. Well,' he said, though not very confidently, 'you've been writing to your landlord about the fixtures, and these are his lawyers writing back—*isn't that it now?*'

'What should I write to *him* for?' said Mr. Ashburn; 'that's not it, Solomon—go on, it gets worse by-and-by!'

'Your one fair daughter also (hullo, Trixie!) we find ourselves compelled to decline, although with more reluctance; but, in spite of some considerable merits, there is a slight roughness (why, her complexion's clear enough!), together with a certain immaturity and total lack of form and motive (you *are* giddy, you know, Trixie, I always told you so), which are in our opinion sufficient to prevent us from making any proposals to you in the matter.'

Uncle Solomon laid down the letter at this point, and looked around open-mouthed: 'I thought I could make out most things,' he said; 'but this is rather beyond me, I must say.'

'Ere are these people—what's their names? Leadbitter and Gandy (who I take it are in the gas-fitting and decorating line)—writing to say in the same breath that they can't come and see to your bells, and they don't want to marry your daughter. Who asked them?—you ain't come down so low in the world to go and offer Trixie to a gas-fitter, I should 'ope, Matthew!—and yet what else *does* it mean?—tell me that, and I'll thank you.'

'Don't ask *me*,' said the unhappy father; 'they're perfect strangers.'

'Trixie, you know nothing about it, I hope?' said Mrs. Ashburn, rather suspiciously.

'No, ma dear,' said Trixie; 'but I don't want to marry either Mr. Leadbitter or Mr. Gandy.'

The situation had become too much for Mark; at first he had hoped that by holding his tongue he might escape being detected, while the rejection of both the novels from which he had hoped so much was a heavy blow which he felt he could scarcely bear in public; but they seemed so determined to sift the

matter to the end that he decided to enlighten them at once, since it must be only a question of time.

But his voice was choked and his face crimson as he said, 'I think perhaps I can explain it.'

'You!' they all cried, while Uncle Solomon added something about 'young men having grown cleverer since his young days.'

'Yes, that letter is addressed to me—M. Ashburn, you see, stands for Mark, not Matthew. It's from—from a firm of publishers,' said the unlucky Mark, speaking very hoarsely; 'I sent them two novels of mine—one was called "One Fair Daughter," and the



other "Sweet Bells Jangled"—and they, they won't take them—that's all.'

There was a 'sensation,' as reporters say, at this announcement: Martha gave a sour little laugh of disgust; Cuthbert looked as if he thought a good deal which brotherly feeling forbade him to put in words; but Trixie tried to take Mark's hand under the table—he shrank from all sympathy, however, at such a moment, and shook her off impatiently, and all she could do was to keep her eyes in pity from his face.

Mrs. Ashburn gave a tragic groan and shook her head: to her a young man who was capable of writing novels was lost; she had

a wholesome horror of all fiction, having come from a race of Dissenters of the strict old-fashioned class, whose prejudices her hard dull nature had retained in all their strength. Her husband, without any very clear views of his own, thought as she did as soon as he knew her opinions, and they all left it to Mr. Lightowler to interpret the 'evident sense of the house.'

He expanded himself imposingly, calling up his bitterest powers of satire to do justice to the occasion: 'So *that's* all, is it?' he said; 'ah, and quite enough, too, *I* should think; so it was the bells on *your* cap that were jingling all the time?'

'Since you put it in that pleasant way,' said Mark, 'I suppose it was.'

'And that's how you've been studying for the Bar of evenings, this is the way you've overcome your fondness for scribbling nonsense? I've spent all the money I've laid out on you' (it was a way of his to talk as if Mark had been a building estate), 'I've given you a good education, all to 'ave you writing novels and get 'em "returned with thanks!"—you might have done that much without going to College!'

'Every writer of any note has had novels declined at some time,' said Mark.

'Well,' said Uncle Solomon, ponderously, 'if that's all, you've made a capital start. You can set up as a big littery pot at once, *you* can, with a brace of 'em. I 'ope you're satisfied with all this, Jane, I'm sure?'

'It's no use saying anything,' she said; 'but it's a bad return after all your kindness to him.'

'A return with thanks,' put in Cuthbert, who was not without some enjoyment of Mark's discomfiture; he had long had a certain contempt for his elder brother as a much overrated man, and he felt, with perfect justice, that had Fortune made him his uncle's favourite, he had brains which would have enabled him to succeed where Mark had failed; but he had been obliged to leave school early for a City office, which had gone some way towards souring him.

'There's an old Latin proverb,' said Mr. Ashburn, with a feeling that it was his turn—'an old Latin proverb, "*Nec suetonijs ultra crepitam.*"'

'No, excuse me, you 'aven't *quite* got it, Matthew,' said his brother-in-law, patronisingly; 'you're very near it, though. It runs, if I don't make a mistake, "*Ne plus ultra sutorius* (not

*suetonius*—he was a Roman emperor)—crepitam," a favourite remark of the poet Cicero—"Cobbler stick to your last," as *we* have it. But your father's right on the main point, Mark. I don't say you need stick to the schoolmastering, unless you choose. I'll see you started at the Bar; I came this very evening to 'ave a talk with you on that. But what do you want to go and lower yourself by literature for? There's a littery man down at our place, a poor feller that writes for the "Chigbourne and Lamford Gazette," and gets my gardener to let him take the measure of my gooseberries; he's got a hat on him my scarecrow wouldn't be seen in. That's what you'll come to!'

'There's some difference,' said Mark, getting roused, 'between the reporter of a country paper and a novelist.'

'There's a difference between you and him,' retorted his uncle; 'he gets what he writes put in and paid so much a line for—you don't. That's all the difference I can see!'

'But when the books are accepted, they will be paid for,' said Mark, 'and well paid for too.'

'I always thought that dog and the shadow must ha' been a puppy, and now I know it,' said his uncle, irritably. 'Now look here, Mark, let's have no more nonsense about it. I said I came here to have a little talk with you, and though things are not what I expected, 'ave it I will. When I saw you last, I thought you were trying to raise yourself by your own efforts and studying law, and I said to myself, "I'll give him another chance." It seems now that was all talk; but I'll give you the chance for all that. If you like to take it, well and good; if not, I've done with you this time once for all. You go on and work 'ard at this Law till you've served your time out, or kept your terms, or whatever they call it, and when you get called, you can give 'em notice to quit at your school. I'll pay your fees and see you started in chambers till you're able to run alone. Only, and mind this, no more of your scribbling—drop that littery rubbish once for all, and I stand by; go on at it, and I leave you to go to the dogs your own way. That's my offer, and I mean it.'

There are few things so unpleasantly corrective to one's self-esteem as a letter of rejection such as had come to Mark—the refusal of the school committee was insignificant in comparison; only those who have yielded to the subtle temptation to submit manuscript to an editor or a publisher's reader, and have seen it return in dishonour, can quite realise the dull anguish of it, the

wild, impotent rebellion that follows, and the stunned sense that all one's ideas will have somehow to be readjusted; perhaps an artist whose pictures are not hung feels something of it, but there one's wounded vanity can more easily find salves.

Mark felt the blow very keenly; for weeks he had been building hopes on these unfortunate manuscripts of his; he had sent both to a firm under whose auspices he was particularly anxious to come before the world, in the hope that one at least would find favour with them, and now the two had been unequivocally declined; for a moment his confidence in himself was shaken, and he almost accepted the verdict.

And yet he hesitated still: the publisher might be wrong; he had heard of books riding out several such storms and sailing in triumphantly at last. There was Carlyle, there was Charlotte Brontë, and other instances occurred to him. And he longed for speedy fame, and the law was a long avenue to it.

'You hear what your uncle says?' said his mother. 'Surely you won't refuse a change like this.'

'Yes, he will,' said Martha. 'Mark would rather write novels than work, wouldn't you, Mark? It must be so amusing to write things which will never be read, I'm sure.'

'Leave Mark alone, Martha,' said Trixie. 'It's a shame—it is.'

'I don't know why you should all be down on me like this,' said Mark; 'there's nothing positively immoral in writing books—at least when it never goes any further. But I daresay you're right, and I believe *you* mean to be kind at any rate, uncle. I'll take your offer. I'll read steadily, and get called, and see if I'm good for anything at the Bar, since it seems I'm good for nothing else.'

'And you'll give up the writing, hey?' said his uncle.

'Oh, yes,' said Mark, irritably, 'anything you please. I'm a reformed character; I'll take the pledge to abstain from ink in all forms if you like.' It was not a very gracious way of accepting what was by no means an unhandsome offer; but he was jarred and worried, and scarcely knew what he said.

Mr. Lightowler was not sensitive, and was too satisfied at having gained his object to cavil at Mark's manner of yielding. 'Very well; that's settled,' he said. 'I'm glad you've come to your senses, I'm sure. We'll have you on the Woolsack yet, and we'll say no more about the other business.'

'And now,' said Mark, with a forced smile, 'I think I'll say



good-night. I'll go and attack the law-books while I'm in the humour for them.

Upstairs in his room he got out his few elementary text-books, and began to read with a sort of sullen determination; but he had not gone very far in the 'descent of an estate-tail,' before he shut the book up in a passion: 'I can't read to-night,' he said savagely; 'it isn't easy to hug my chains all at once; it will be a long time before I come out strong on estates-tail. If Holroyd (who says he *likes* the jargon) can't get a living by it, there's not much hope for me. I loathe it! I'm sure I had a chance with those books of mine, too; but that's all over. I must burn them, I suppose—— Who's there?' for there was a tap at the door.

'It's me, Mark—Trixie—let me in.' Mark rose and opened the door to Trixie, in a loose morning wrapper. 'Mark, I'm so sorry, dear,' she said softly.

'Sorry! you ought to rejoice, Trixie,' said Mark, with a bitter laugh. 'I'm a brand from the burning—a repentant novelist. I've seen my errors and am going to turn Lord Chancellor.'

'You mustn't be angry with them,' said Trixie. 'Dear ma is very strict; but then she is so anxious to see you making a living, Mark, and you know they don't give you very much at St. Peter's. And Martha and Cuthbert can't help saying disagreeable things. Don't you think, perhaps,' she added timidly, 'that it's better for you to give up thinking about writing any more?'

'Well, I've done it, Trixie, at any rate. I'm not so bad as that fellow Delobelle, in "Fromont Jeune," with his "Je n'ai pas le droit de renoncer au théâtre!" am I? I've renounced *my* stage. I'm a good little boy, and won't make a mess with nasty ink and pens any more. When I get those confounded books back they shall go into the fire—by Jove they shall!'

'No, Mark, don't, it would be such a pity,' cried Trixie. 'I'm sure they were beautifully written; quite as well as some that get printed. I wish you could write novels and be Lord Chancellor too, Mark.'

'Bring out Acts in three volumes, and edit Judicature Rules in fancy covers for railway reading? It would be very nice, Trixie, wouldn't it? But I'm afraid it wouldn't do, even if I wrote them in secret, under the Woolsack. If I write anything now, it must be a smart spicy quarto on Bankruptcy, or a rattling digest on the Law of Settlement and Highways. My fictions will be all legal ones.'

'I know you will do your best,' said Trixie, simply.

Mark dreamed that night—much as other disappointed literary aspirants have dreamed before him—that a second letter had come from the publishers, stating that they had reconsidered their decision, and offering repentantly to publish both novels on fabulous terms. He was just rushing to call Trixie, and tell her the good news, when the dream faded, and he awoke to the consciousness of his very different circumstances.

Literature had jilted him. The Law was to be his mistress henceforth: a bony and parchment-faced *innamorata*, with a horsehair wig; and he thought of the task of wooing her with a shudder.

## CHAPTER V.

### NEIGHBOURS.



MORE than a week had passed since the scene in Malakoff Terrace described in my last chapter—a week spent by Mark in the drudgery of school work, which had grown more distasteful than ever now he could indulge in no golden dreams of a glorious deliverance; for he could not accept his new prospects as an adequate substitute, and was beginning to regret his abandonment of his true ambitions with a longing that was almost fierce.

He had gone down to 'The Woodbines,' his uncle's villa at Chigbourne, in pursuance of the invitation given him; and Mr. Lightowler's undisguised recovery of the feeling of proprietorship in him, and his repeated incitements to pursue his studies with unwearying ardour, only increased Mark's disgust with himself and his future, as he

walked along the lanes with his relative towards the little church beyond the village on the last Sunday in November.

It was a bright clear frosty day, with a scarlet sun glowing through dun-coloured clouds, and a pale blue sky beyond the haze above their heads; the country landscape had suggestions of Christmas cheeriness, impossible enough to Londoners who cannot hope to share in country-house revels *à la* Mr. Caldecott, but vaguely exhilarating notwithstanding.

Mark knew that his Christmas would be passed in town with his family, who would keep it as they observed Sunday, and refrain from any attempt at seasonable jollity; yet he began to feel elated by its approach, or the weather, or some instinct of youth and health which set his blood tingling and drove away his dissatisfaction with every step he took.

Uncle Solomon had come out in broadcloth, and a large hat with such an ecclesiastical brim that it influenced his conversation, causing it to be more appropriate than Sunday talk will sometimes be, even amongst the best people. He discoursed of Ritualism, and deplored the hold it had acquired on the vicar, and the secret manoeuvres of the detested Humpage in the vestry.

'I was brought up a Baptist,' he said, 'and I'd go back to 'em now, if I didn't know how they'd all crow about it; and they're a poor lot at Little Bethel, too, not a penny-piece among 'em.'

'When we get into the church,' he continued, 'you give a look left of the chancel, close by the door where the shelf is with the poor-loaves. You'll see a painted winder there which that 'Umpage got put up to his aunt—that's his ostentation, that is. I don't believe he ever *had* an aunt; but I don't wish to judge him. Only you look at that window, and tell me how it strikes you afterwards. He's got the artist to do him as the Good Samaritan there! I call it scandalous!—there's no mistake about it; the 'air's not the same colour, and the Eastern robes hide it a bit; but he's there for all that. I don't relish seeing 'Umpage figurin' away in painted glass and a great gaudy turban every time I look up, he's quite aggravating enough in his pew. If I chose to go to the expense, I could put up a winder too, and 'ave myself done.'

'As a saint?' suggested Mark.

'Never you mind. If I liked to be a saint on glass I could, I suppose. I'm a churchwarden, and there's no reason why 'Umpage should 'ave all the painted winders to himself; but I shouldn't

care to make myself so conspicuous. 'Umpage, now, he likes that sort of thing.'

This brought them to the church, a Perpendicular building with a decidedly 'Early English' smell in it, and Uncle Solomon led the way to his pew, stopping to nudge Mark as they passed the memorial to his enemy's meretricious aunt; he nudged him again presently, after he had retired behind the ecclesiastical hat and emerged again to deal out some very large prayer and hymn books as if they were cards.

'That's him—that's 'Umpage,' he said in a loud whisper.

Mark looked up in time to see an old gentleman advance to the door of the pew in front of them—a formidable-looking old gentleman, with a sallow face, long iron-grey locks, full grey eyes, a hook-nose, and prominent teeth under a yellowish-grey moustache and beard.

He felt a sudden shame, for behind Mr. Humpage came a pretty child with long floating light hair, with a staid fresh-faced woman in grey, and last a girl of about nineteen or twenty, who seemed to have caught the very audible whisper, for she glanced in its direction as she passed in with the slightest possible gleam of amused surprise in her eyes and a lifting of her delicate eyebrows.

A loud intoned 'Amen' came from the vestry just then, the organ played a voluntary, and the vicar and curate marched in at the end of a procession of little surpliced country boys, whose boots made a very undevotional clatter over the brasses and flagstones.

As a low churchman Mr. Lightowler protested against this processional pomp by a loud snort, which expression of opinion he repeated at any tendency to genuflection on the part of the clergymen during the service, until the little girl turned round and gazed at him with large concerned eyes, as if she thought he must be either very devout or extremely unwell.

Mark heard little of the service; he was dimly aware of his uncle singing all the psalms and responses with a lusty tunelessness, and coming to fearful grief in gallant attempts to follow the shrill little choristers over a difficult country of turns and flourishes. He explained afterwards that he liked to set an example of 'joining in.'

But Mark saw little else but the soft shining knot of hair against the dark sables of the hat and tippet of his beautiful

neighbour, and a glimpse of her delicate profile now and then, as she turned to find the places for her little sister, who invariably disdained assistance as long as possible. He began to speculate idly on her probable character. Was she proud?—there was a shade of disdain about her smile when he first saw her. Self-willed?—the turn of her graceful head was slightly imperious. She could be tender with it all—he inferred that from the confidence with which the child nestled against her as the sermon began, and the gentle protecting hand that drew her closer still.

Mark had been in and out of love several times in his life; his last affair had been with a pretty, shallow flirt with a clever manner picked up at secondhand, and though she had come to the end of her *répertoire* and ceased to amuse or interest him long before they parted by mutual consent, he chose to believe his heart for ever blighted and proof against all other women, so that he was naturally in the most favourable condition for falling an easy victim.

He thought he had never seen any one quite like this girl, so perfectly natural and unaffected, and yet with such an indefinable air of distinction in her least movement. What poems, what books might not be written, with such an influence to inspire them, and then Mark recollected with a pang that he had done with all that for ever now. That most delicate form of homage would be beyond his power, even if he ever had the opportunity of paying it, and the thought did not tend to reconcile him to his lot.

Would chance ever bring him within the sphere of his new-found divinity? Most probably not. Life has so many of these tantalising half-glimpses, which are never anything more. 'If she is Humpage's daughter,' he thought, 'I'm afraid it's hopeless; but she shall not pass out of my life if I can help it!' and so he dreamed through the sermon, with the vicar's high cracked voice forming a gentle clacking accompaniment, which he quite missed when the benediction came upon him unexpectedly.

They came out of church into bright November sunshine; the sun had disengaged itself now from the dun clouds, melted the haze, and tempered the air almost to the warmth of early spring. Mark looked round for Mr. Humpage and his party, but without success; they had lingered behind, perhaps, as he could not help fearing, designedly. He determined, however, to find out what he could about them, and approached the subject diplomatically.

'I saw the window,' he began; 'that was the Good Samaritan in front, of course. I recognised him by the likeness at once.'

'He took care it should be like,' said Uncle Solomon, with a contemptuous sniff.

'That was his family with him, I suppose?' Mark asked carelessly.

'Umpage is a bachelor, or gives himself out for such,' said his uncle, charitably.

'Then those young ladies—are they residents here?'

'Which young ladies?'

'In his pew,' said Mark, a little impatiently, 'the little girl with the long hair, and—and the other one?'

'You don't go to church to stare about you, do you? I didn't take any notice of them; they're strangers here—friends of 'Umpage, I daresay. That was his sister in grey; she keeps house for him, and they say he leads her a pretty life with his tempers. Did you see that old woman behind in a black coalscuttle? That was old widow Barnjum; keeps a sweetstuff shop down in the village. I've seen her that far in liquor sometimes she can't find her way about and 'as to be taken 'ome in a barrow. You wouldn't think it to look at her, would you? I shall give the vicar the 'int to tell old John Barker he ought to stay away till he's got over that cough of his; it's enough to make anybody ill to listen to him. I've a good mind to tell him of it myself; and I will, too, if I come across him. The Colonel wasn't in church again. They tell me he's turned Atheist, and loafs about all Sunday with a gun. I've seen him myself driving a dog-cart Sunday afternoons in a pot 'at, and I knew then what would come of that. Here we are again!' he said, as they reached the palings of 'The Woodbines.' 'We'll just stroll round to get an appetite for dinner before we go in.'

Uncle Solomon led the way into the stables, where he lingered to slap his mare on the back and brag about her, and then Mark had to be introduced to the pig. 'What I call a 'andsome pig, yer know,' he remarked; 'a perfect picture, he is' (a picture that needed cleaning, Mark thought)—'you come down to me in another three weeks or so, and we'll try a bit off of that chap'—an observation which seemed to strike the pig as in very indifferent taste, for he shook his ears, grunted, and retired to his sty in a pointed manner.

After that there was plenty to do and see before Mark was allowed to dine: Lassie, the colley, had to be unfastened for a run about the 'grounds,' of which a mechanical mouse might have made the tour in five minutes; there was a stone obelisk to



be inspected that Uncle Solomon had bought a bargain at a sale and set up at a corner of the lawn inscribed with the names of his favourite characters living and dead—a remarkably scratch team, by the way; then he read out sonorous versions of the Latin names of most of his shrubs, which occupied a considerable time, until, at last, by way of the kitchen-garden and strawberry beds, they came to a little pond and rustic summer-house, near which the boundary fence was unconcealed by any trees or shrubs.

‘See that gap?’ said Mr. Lightowler, pointing to a paling of which the lower half was torn away; ‘that’s where ’Umpage’s blathering old gander gets through. I ’ate the sight of the beast, and I’d sooner ’ave a traction-engine running about my beds than him! I’ve spoke about it to ’Umpage till I’m tired, and I shall ’ave to take the law into my own hands soon, I know I shall. There was Wilcox, my gardener, said something about some way he had to serve him out—but it’s come to nothing. And now we’ll go in for a wash before dinner.’

Uncle Solomon was a widower; a niece of his late wife generally lived with him and superintended his domestic affairs—an elderly person, colourless and cold, who, however, had a proper sense of her position as a decayed relative on the wife’s side, and made him negatively comfortable; she was away just then, which was partly the reason why Mark had been invited to bear his uncle company.

They dined in a warm little room, furnished plainly but well; and after dinner Uncle Solomon gave Mark a cigar, and took down a volume of American Commentaries on the Epistles, which he used to give a Sunday tone to his nap; but before it could take effect, there were sounds faintly audible through the closed windows, as of people talking at the end of the grounds.

Mr. Lightowler opened his drooping eyelids: ‘There’s some one in my garden,’ he said. ‘I must go out and put a stop to that—some of those urchins out of the village—they’re always at it!’

He put on an old garden-hat and sallied out, followed by Mark: ‘The voices seem to come down from ’Umpage’s way, but there’s no one to be seen,’ he said, as they went along. ‘Yes, there is, though; there’s ’Umpage himself and his friends looking across the fence at something! What does he want to go staring on to *my* land for—like his confounded impudence!’

When they drew a little nearer, he stopped short and, turning to Mark with a face purple with anger, said, ‘Well, of all the

impudence—if he isn't egging on that infernal gander now—put him through the 'ole himself, I daresay!'

On arriving at the scene, Mark saw the formidable old gentleman of that morning glaring angrily over the fence; by his side was the fair and slender girl he had seen in church, while at intervals her little sister's wondering face appeared above the top of the palings, a small dog uttering short sharp barks and yelps behind her.

They were all looking at a large grey gander, which was unquestionably trespassing at that moment; but it was unjust to say, as Mr. Lightowler had said, that they were giving it any encouragement; the prevailing anxiety seemed to be to recover it, but as the fence was not low, and Mr. Humpage not young enough to care to scale it, they were obliged to wait the good pleasure of the bird.

And Mark soon observed that the misguided bird was not in a condition to be easily prevailed upon, being in a very advanced stage of solemn intoxication; it was tacking about the path with an erratic stateliness, its neck stretched defiantly, and its choked sleepy cackle said, 'You lemme 'lone now, I'm all ri', walk shtraight enough 'fiwan'to!' as plainly as bird-language can be rendered.

As Uncle Solomon bore down on it, it put on an air of elaborate indifference, meant to conceal a retreat to the gap by which it had entered, and began to waddle with excessive dignity in that direction, but from the way in which it repeatedly aimed itself at the intact portions of the paling, it was not difficult to infer that it was under a not infrequent optical illusion.

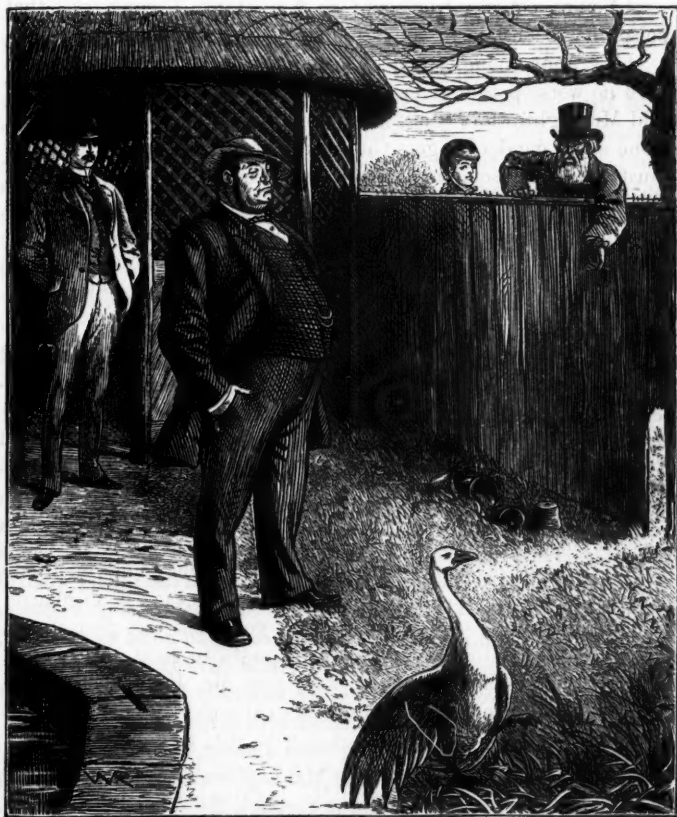
Mr. Lightowler gave a short and rather savage laugh. 'Wilcox *has* done it, then!' he said. Mark threw away his cigar, and slightly lifted his hat as he came up; he felt somewhat ashamed and strongly tempted to laugh at the same time; he dared not look at the face of Mr. Humpage's companion, and kept in the background as a dispassionate spectator.

Mr. Lightowler evidently had made up his mind to be as offensive as possible. 'Afternoon, Mr. 'Umpage,' he began; 'I think I've 'ad the pleasure of seeing this bird of yours before; he's good enough to come in odd times and assist my gardener; you'll excuse me for making the remark, however, but when he's like this I think he ought to be kep' indoors.'

'This is disgraceful, sir,' the other gentleman retorted, galled by this irony; 'disgraceful!'

'It's not pretty in a gander, I must say,' agreed Uncle Solomon, wilfully misunderstanding. 'Does it often forget itself in this way, now?'

'Poor dear goose,' chanted the little girl, reappearing at this juncture, 'it's *so* giddy; is it ill, godpapa?'



'Run away, Dolly,' said Mr. Humpage; 'it's no sight for you; run away.'

'Then Frisk mustn't look either; come away, Frisk,' and Dolly vanished again.

When she had gone, the old gentleman said, with a dangerous

smile that showed all his teeth, 'Now, Mr. Lightowler, I think I'm indebted to you for the abominable treatment of this bird?'

'Somebody's been treating it, it's very plain,' said the other, looking at the bird, which was making a feeble attempt to spread out its wings and screech contemptuously at the universe.

'You're equivocating, sir; do you think I can't see that poison has been laid in your grounds for this unhappy bird?'

'It's 'appy enough; don't you be uneasy, Mr. 'Umpage, there's been no worse poison given to it than some of my old Glenlivat,' said Mr. Lightowler; 'and, let me tell you, it's not every man, let alone every gander, as gets the luck to taste that. My gardener must have laid some of it down for—for agricultural purposes, an' your bird, comin' in through the 'ole (as you may p'raps remember I've spoke to you about before) 'as bin makin' a little too free with it, that's all. It's welcome as the flowers in May to it, only don't blame me if your bird is laid up with a bad 'eadache by-and-by, not that there's an 'eadache in the 'ole cask.'

At this point Mark could not resist a glance at the fair face across the fence. In spite of her feminine compassion for the bird and respect for its proprietor, Mabel had not been able to overcome a sense of the absurdity of the scene, with the two angry old gentlemen wrangling across a fence over an intoxicated gander; the face Mark saw was rippling with subdued amusement, and her dark grey eyes met his for an instant with an electric flash of understanding; then she turned away with a slight increase of colour in her cheeks. 'I'm going in, Uncle Antony,' she said; 'do come, too, as soon as you can; don't quarrel about it any more—ask them to give you back the poor goose, and I'll take it into the yard again; it ought to go at once.'

'Let me manage it my own way,' said Mr. Humpage, testily. 'May I trouble you, Mr. Lightowler, to kindly hand me over that bird—when you have quite finished with it?' he added.

'That bird has been taking such a fancy to my manure-heap that I'll ask to be excused,' said Mr. Lightowler. 'If you was to whistle to it now, I might 'ead it through the 'ole; but it always finds it a good deal easier to come through than it does to come back, even when it's sober. I'm afraid you'll have to wait till it comes round a bit.'

At this the gander lurched against a half-buried flower-pot, and rolled helplessly over with its eyes closed. 'Oh, the poor thing, cried Mabel, 'it's dying!'

'Do you see that?' demanded its owner, furiously; 'it's dying, and you've had it poisoned, sir; that soaked bread was put there by you or your orders—and, by the Lord, you shall pay for it!'

'I never ordered or put it there either,' said his enemy, doggedly.

'We shall see about that—we shall see,' said Mr. Humpage; 'you can say that by-and-by.'

'It's no good losing your temper, now—keep cool, can't you?' roared Uncle Solomon.

'It's likely to make a man cool, isn't it? to come out for a quiet stroll on Sunday afternoon, and find that his gander has been decoyed into a neighbour's garden and induced to poison itself with whisky?'

'Decoyed? I like that! pretty innerecent, that bird of yours! too timid to come in without a reg'lar invitation, wasn't he?' jeered Mr. Lightowler; 'quite 'ad to press him to step in and do the garden up a bit. You and your gander!'

Mabel had already escaped; Mark remained trying to persuade his uncle to come away before the matter ceased to be farcical.

'I shall take this matter up, sir! I shall take it up!' said Mr. Humpage, in a white rage; 'and I don't think it will do you credit as a churchwarden, let me tell you!'

'Don't you go bringing that in here, now!' retorted Uncle Solomon. 'I'll not be spoken to as a churchwarden by you, Mr. 'Umpage, sir, of all parties!'

'You'll not be spoken to by anybody very soon—at any rate, as a churchwarden. I mean to bring this affair before the magistrates. I shall take out a summons against you for unlawfully ill-treating and abusing my gander, sir!'

'I tell you I never ill-treated him; as for abuse, I don't say. But that's neither here nor there. He ain't so thin-skinned as all that, your gander ain't. And if I choose to put whisky, or brandy, or champagne-cup about my grounds, I'm not obliged to consult your ridik'lous gander, I *do* hope. I didn't ask him in to sample 'em. I don't care a brass button for your summonses. You can summons me till you're black in the face!'

But in spite of these brave words Mr. Lightowler was really not a little alarmed by the threat.

'We shall see about that!' said the other again, viciously. 'And now, once more, will you give me back my poor bird?'

Mark thought it had gone far enough. He took up the

heavy bird, which made some maudlin objections, and carried it gingerly to the fence. 'Here's the victim, Mr. Humpage,' he said lightly. 'I think it will be itself again in a couple of hours or so. And now, perhaps, we can let the matter drop for the present.'

The old gentleman glared at Mark as he received his bird: 'I don't know who you may be, young sir, or what share you've had in this disgraceful business. If I trace it to you, you shall repent of it, I promise you! I don't wish to have any further communications with you or your friend, who's old enough to know his duty better as a neighbour and a Christian. You will let him know, with my compliments, that he'll hear more of this.'

He retired with the outraged bird under his arm, leaving Uncle Solomon, who had, of course, heard his parting words, looking rather ruefully at his nephew.

'It's all very well for you to laugh,' he said to Mark, as they turned to go into the house again; 'but let me tell you, if that hot-tempered old idiot goes and brings all this up at Petty Sessions, it may be an awkward affair for me. He's been a lawyer, has 'Umpage, and he'll do his worst. A pretty thing to 'ave my name in all the papers about 'ere as torturing a goose! I dessay they'll try and make out that I poured the whisky down the brute's throat. It's Wilcox's doings, and none of mine; but they'll put it all on me. I'll drive over to Green & Ferret's to-morrow, and see how I stand. You've studied the law. What do *you* think about it, come? Can he touch me, eh? But he hasn't got a leg to stand on, like his gander—it's all nonsense, *ain't* it?'

If there had ever been a chance, Mark thought bitterly, after comforting his uncle as well as his very moderate acquaintance with the law permitted, of anything like intimacy between himself and the girl whose face had fascinated him so strangely, it was gone now: that bird of evil omen had balked his hopes as effectually as its ancestors had frustrated the aspiring Gaul.

The dusk was drawing on as they walked across the lawn, from which the russet glow of the sunset had almost faded; the commonplace villa before them was tinted with violet, and in the west the hedges and trees formed an intricate silhouette against a background of ruddy gold and pale lemon; one or two flamingo-coloured clouds still floated languidly higher up in a greenish blue sky; over everything the peace and calm had settled that mark the close of a perfect autumn day, with the additional stillness which always makes itself perceptible on a Sunday.



Mark felt the influence of it all, and was vaguely comforted—he remembered the passing interchange of glances across the fence, and it consoled him.

At supper that evening his uncle, too, recovered his spirits: 'If he brings a summons, they'll dismiss it,' he said confidently; 'but he knows better than that as a lawyer—if he does, he'll find the laugh turned against him, hey? I'm not answerable for what Wilcox chooses to do without my orders. I never told him he wasn't to—but that ain't like telling him to go and do it, is it now? And where's the cruelty, either?—a blend like that, too. Just try a glass, now, and say what you think—he'll be dropping in for more of it, if he's the bird I take him for!'

But as they were going upstairs to bed, he stopped at the head of the staircase and said to Mark, 'Before I forget it, you remind me to get Wilcox to find out, quietly, the first thing to-morrow, how that gander is.'

## CHAPTER VI.

### SO NEAR AND YET SO FAR.



HEN Mark awoke next morning the weather had undergone one of those sudden and complete changes which form one of the chief attractions of our climate; there had been a frost, and with it a thin white mist, which threw its clinging veil over the landscape; the few trees which were near enough to be seen were covered with a kind of thick grey vegetation, that gave them a spectral resemblance to their summer selves. Breakfast was early, as Mark had to be at St. Peter's as soon after morning chapel as possible,

and he came down shivering to find his uncle already seated. 'The dog-cart will be round in five minutes,' said the latter

gentleman, with his mouth full ; ' so make the most of your time. You'll have a cold drive. I'll take you over to the station myself, and go on and see Ferret after.'

The too-zealous Wilcox brought the trap round. ' 'Ave you been round to see about that bird next door?' Mr. Lightowler asked rather anxiously, as the man stood by the mare's head. ' Yessir,' said Wilcox, with a grin ; ' I went and saw Mr. 'Umpage's man, and he say the old gander was werry bad when they got 'im 'ome, but he ain't any the worse for what he 'ad this mornin', sir ; though the man, he dew say as the gander seem a bit sorry for 'isself tew They tough old birds 'a' got strong 'eads, sir ; I knowed it 'ud do him no 'arm, bless ye !'

' Well, don't you go trying it again, Wilcox, that's all. Mind what I say,' said Uncle Solomon, with visible relief, ' else you and me 'll 'ave words and part. Let her go,' and they drove off.

He gave Mark much good advice on the way, such as wealthy uncles seem to secrete and exude almost unconsciously, as toads yield moisture ; but Mark paid only a moderate degree of attention to it as they spun past the low dim hedges ; he hardly noticed what could be seen along the road even, which was not much—a gable-end or a haystack starting out for an instant from the fog, or a shadowy labourer letting himself through a gate—he was thinking of the girl whose eyes had met his the afternoon before.

He had dreamed of her all that night—a confused ridiculous dream, but with a charm about it which was lingering still ; he thought they had met and understood one another at once, and he had taken her to the village church where he had first seen her, and they had a private box, and Uncle Solomon took the chair, while old Mr. Shelford, Trixie, and young Langton were all in the choir, which was more like an orchestra. It was not particularly connected or reverent, but she had not been included in the general travesty—his sleeping brain had respected her image even in its waywardness, and presented it as vivid and charming as in life, so that the dream with all its absurdity seemed to have brought her nearer to him, and he could not resist the fancy that *she* might have some recollection of it too.

A low hum in the still air, and distant reports and choked railway whistles told them they were near the station, but the fog had grown so much denser that there was no other indication of

it, until Mr. Lightowler brought up sharply opposite the end of an inclined covered staircase, which seemed to spring out of nothing and lead nowhere, where they left the dog-cart in charge of a flyman and went up to the platform.

There a few old gentlemen with rosy faces were stamping up and down and slapping their chests, exchanging their 'Raw morning this, sir's,' 'Ah, it is indeed's,' with an air of good men bearing up under an undeserved persecution.

'Sharp morning this to stand about in,' said Uncle Solomon; 'let's go into the waiting-room, there's a fire there.' The waiting-room was the usual drab little room, with a bottle of water and tumblers on a bare stained table, and local advertisements on the dingy walls; the gas was lighted, and flickered in a sickly white fishtail flame, but the fire was blazing cheerfully, giving a sheen to the silver-grey fur of a child in a crimson plush hat who stood before it embracing a small round basket out of which a Skye terrier's head was peering inquisitively.

The firelight shone, too, on the graceful form of a girl, who was bending towards it holding out her slender hands to the blaze. Mark scarcely needed to glance at the face she turned towards the newcomers to recognise that fortune had allowed him one more chance: Mr. Humpage's visitors were evidently returning to town by the same train as himself, and the old gentleman in person was standing with his back to them examining a timetable on the wall.

Uncle Solomon, in his relief at Wilcox's information that morning, did not seem to perceive any awkwardness in the encounter, but moved about and coughed noisily, as if anxious to attract his enemy's attention. Mark felt considerably embarrassed, dreading a scene; but he glanced as often as he dared at the lady of his thoughts, who was drawing on her gloves again with a dainty deliberation.

'Godpapa,' said the little girl, suddenly, 'you never told me if Frisk had been good. Has he?'

'So good that he kept me awake thinking of him all night,' said the old gentleman, drily, without turning.

'Did he howl, godpapa? He does sometimes when he's left out in the garden, you know.'

'He did,' said Mr. Humpage. 'Oh, yes—he howled; he's a clever dog at that.'

'And you really *like* him to?' said Dolly. 'Some people don't.'

'Narrow-minded of 'em, very,' growled the old gentleman.

'Isn't it?' said Dolly, innocently. 'Well, I'm glad *you* like it, godpapa, because now I shall bring him to see you again. When there's a moon he can howl much louder. I'll bring him when the next moon comes, shall I?'

'We'll see, Chuckie, we'll see. I shouldn't like to keep him sitting up all night to howl on my account; it wouldn't be good for his health. But the very next blue moon we have down in these parts, I'll send up for him—I promise you that.'

Dolly was evidently about to inquire searchingly into the nature of this local phenomenon, but before she could begin the old gentleman turned and saw that they were not alone.

'Mornin', Mr. 'Umpage,' said Uncle Solomon, clearing his throat; and Mark felt a pang of regret for the lost aspirate.

'Good morning to you, sir,' said the other, distantly.

The elder girl returned the bow which Mark risked, though without giving any sign of remembrance; but Dolly remarked audibly, 'Why, that's the old man next door that gave your goose something to make it giddy, isn't it, godpapa?'

'I hope,' said Uncle Solomon, 'that now you've had time to think over what 'appened yesterday afternoon, you'll see that you went too far in using the terms that fell from you—more particularly as the bird's as well as ever, from what I hear this morning?'

'I don't wish to reopen that affair at present,' said the other, stiffly.

'Well, I've heard about enough of it, too; so if you'll own you used language that was unwarrantable, I'm willing to say no more about it for my part.'

'I've no doubt you are, Mr. Lightowler, but you must excuse me from entering into any conversation on the subject. I can't dismiss it as lightly as you seem to do—and, in short, I don't mean to discuss it here, sir.'

'Very well, just as you please. I only meant to be neighbourly—but it don't signify. I can keep myself to myself as well as other parties, I daresay.'

'Then have the goodness to do it, Mr. Lightowler. Mabel, the train is due now. Get your wraps and things and come along.'

He walked fiercely past the indignant Uncle Solomon, followed by Mabel and Dolly, the former of whom seemed a little ashamed

of Mr. Humpage's behaviour, for she kept her eyes lowered as she passed Mark, while Dolly looked up at him with childish curiosity.

'Confound these old fools!' thought Mark, angrily; 'what do they want to squabble for in this ridiculous way? Why, if they had only been on decent terms, I might have been introduced to her—to Mabel—by this time; we might even have travelled up to town together.'

'Regular old Tartar, that!' said his uncle, under his breath. 'I believe he'll try and have the law of me now. Let him—I don't



care! Here's your train at last. You won't be in by the timetable this morning with all this fog about.'

Mark got into a compartment next to that in which Mr. Humpage had put Mabel and her sister; it was as near as he dared to venture. He could hear Mabel's clear soft voice saying the usual last words at the carriage window, while Uncle Solomon was repeating his exhortations to study and abstinence from any 'littery nonsense.'

Then the train, after one or two false starts on the greasy rails, moved out, and Mark had a parting glimpse of the neighbours

turning sharply round on the platform with an elaborate affectation of being utter strangers.

He had no paper to amuse him, for the station was not important enough for a bookstall, and there was nothing to be seen out of the windows, which were silvered with frozen moisture. He had the compartment to himself, and lay back looking up rather sentimentally at the bull's-eye, through which he heard occasional snatches of Dolly's imperious treble.

'I know her name now,' he thought, with a quite unreasonable joy—'Mabel. I shall remember that. I wonder if they are going all the way to town, and if I could offer to be of any use to them at King's Cross? At all events, I shall see her once more then.

It was not a very long journey from Chigbourne to the terminus, but, as will be seen hereafter, it was destined to be a landmark in the lives of both Mark and Mabel, though the meeting he looked forward to at the end of it never took place.

*(To be continued.)*



## A ROMANCE OF THE MIRAGE.

THE romances encountered in real life are dreadfully sketchy and incomplete. It is the best and most interesting function of the imaginative writer to give true stories shape rather than to build up fictions; or so at least I think, having no faculty of invention. The outline of a tale which I am going to fill in was given me by an official of the Telegraph Service as we steamed one morning across the blue bay of Suez. A slight mirage lay beneath the glowing hills on the desert edge. I observed that the phenomenon is nowhere so vivid as in the South African *veldt*, according to my experience. My companion's travels had not been so wide, though much more profitable. But duty had kept him stationed in many parts of the Egyptian desert, and he had witnessed such surprising illusions as eclipse all I ever saw or heard of. I suggested that a plain report of them, coming from an authoritative person like himself, would be valuable to science and most curious to the public.

He modestly could not be brought to credit that any experience of his might be worthy of record, but told me what follows.

At one time he had charge of a station down the Red Sea. It was lonely in the extremest sense of the word. Himself, two native clerks, and two servants were the only human beings within a radius of unknown length. The Bedouins do not come that way, for there is not a well nor a green herb for many miles round. Once a month a native vessel called to replenish the kegs and to bring forage for his horse and a pony belonging to one of the clerks, Zohrab. If this supply did not arrive within ten days of its appointed time, the standing orders of the little colony enjoined them to embark and leave the place. They had a boat for the purpose.

Their station, Um el Jemal, was the home of mirage. It displayed itself in every possible form, and in many which would be thought impossible. Often, when they turned out, the desert was a lively scene. Fishing craft sailed in pellucid rivers; sometimes a great merchant ship or a man-o'-war appeared; villages stood out distinctly, camels and caravans stalked along, men prayed and marched. These visions changed from day to day. Sometimes

the fantastic became grotesque ; animals and men walked stolidly upside down, ships sailed in comfort on their trucks. But one picture appeared always the same, and very frequently. It flashed into sight directly behind the station. It was an ancient building of great size, castellated, with a broad terrace before its massive gateway. It did not glimmer into view, nor flicker in vanishing, but burst on the eye complete, substantial, remained about fifty minutes, and disappeared as suddenly. So distinct was this phantom castle that the clerks knew each of its windows as familiarly as their own. The terrace was often occupied by horses and men, who presently walked out of the scene, melting into air. The moment of disclosure, and the duration of the spectacle, varied with the season and with other circumstances doubtless ; but this was the most constant of all the mirage pictures. Scientific people will regret that my informant did not make precise observations and note them down. Civilised men have seldom opportunity to watch a phenomenon of the kind which often recurs. That there must be such is evident ; several others less conspicuous and less interesting haunted Um el Jemal.

The gentleman of whom I speak is not a fanciful person, and he had grave business to occupy his mind. The clerks enjoyed more leisure. They were young ; and though an Oriental scarcely understands what it is to be bored, that attribute is not caused by lack of imagination. They took greater interest in watching this apparition than their superior could have found, since they understood much in it that would have been a mystery to him. The spectral mansion was rather lively, as I have said. People came and went, and the very unusual proportion who were robed all in white, the frequent praying and preaching, told a political secret. Wherever this fantastic house might be situate, it was a haunt of the Wahabis, therefore a home of treason and rebellion, and therefore Zohrab loved to observe it. When there were no visitors on the terrace, donkeys often paraded there, equipped with such housings as wealthy Arab ladies use. And presently ladies mounted, their sex distinguishable, though they sat astride, by trousers and veil and the ugly, shapeless *ferijeh*. These demoiselles or dames rode out, but they never returned ; probably because the vision had disappeared before they got back. It was evident that the master of the house had a large harem.

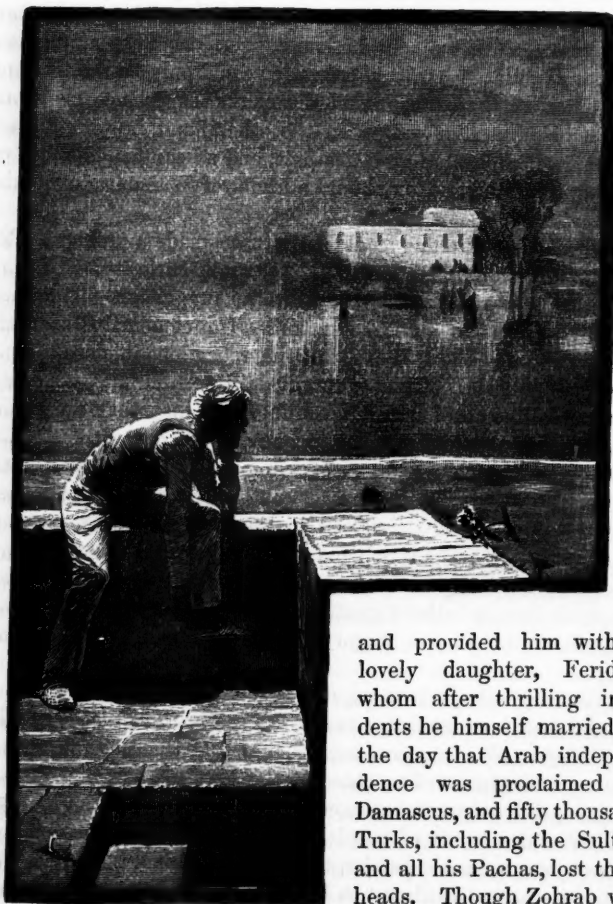
About that personage the clerks could not make up their minds. Upon the one hand they thought they recognised him in a tall

man who was present when the females of the household came on the terrace, as occasionally happened. It was deserted then, of course, by all males excepting this individual, who sat beneath the wall and smoked with some of the women, probably the elders. Amongst the bevy playing round, several were children and others quite young, as their lively motions suggested. They approached the man familiarly. One so privileged could only be the husband and father, or the eunuch; and the clerks' experience negatived this latter supposition. But, on the other hand, he wore a black burnoos, coloured clothes beneath it, and a head-handkerchief of the brightest tints. How should a leader of Wahabis dress himself like that?

Where this dwelling could be situate made a problem. My informant himself found time to indulge a mild curiosity. He looked up his maps and books, but they gave no suggestion. There was actually no hint to guide conjecture. Um el Jemal lies on the Arabian shore of the Red Sea, but the reflections in mirage came from every quarter. They were ruled by certain laws, no doubt, immutable like all of nature's framing, but what they can be one is more puzzled to guess the longer one's experience of them. The real boats of which they saw a phantom, as it were, must be sailing on the west, or north-west, or south-west, if not on all these points at once. But they stood in the picture among trees and villages and caravans which must be, the substance of them, in directions exactly opposite; unless indeed they were thrown across the Red Sea and the Egyptian desert hundreds of miles from the westward. It was mighty bewildering, and my friend gave it up.

His clerks knew nothing of science. Mirage was for them a natural feature of landscape in this lower world. But the number of Wahabis who frequented the house told them it must lie in Arabia somewhere. The elder of the two, a Mohammedan and discreet, did not want to know too much about a spot which was evidently the haunt of rebels and heretics. But the younger, Zohrab, was a fanatic patriot, though a Christian. He hated the Wahabi schismatics almost as bitterly as they hate his own creed, but he was reluctantly inclined to think, as do so many, that the supreme foe, the Turk, will only be expelled by the aid of these bloodthirsty desperadoes. He watched the house where, as he fancied, a grand conspiracy was brewing, until it haunted him. Mixing up together war, patriotism, politics, romance, and love,

Zohrab constructed new tales of adventure on every recurrence of the mirage. He had made a very distinct individuality for the Sheikh, the man in the black burnoos. He had given him a name



and provided him with a lovely daughter, Ferideh, whom after thrilling incidents he himself married on the day that Arab independence was proclaimed in Damascus, and fifty thousand Turks, including the Sultan and all his Pachas, lost their heads. Though Zohrab was educated in Frank learning,

he did not understand mercy to the Ottoman. His most cherished wedding present would have been the false Khalif's head.

He was a Syrian of Beyrout, and a Christian as has been said. I picture a tall, lithe youth, small of bone but muscular, with large

eyes and a delicate moustache ; in short, a hero after the school-girl fancy when amiable and composed. An æsthetic barber would have longed for a model of Zohrab to exhibit in his shop window had he seen him in such a mood. But if, in conversation, somebody spoke well of the Turk, or alluded to the great days past and the present degradation of the Arab, this youth quivered and flamed like a war-horse tethered. An Arab of pure blood is curiously like his steed in peculiarities of nervous expression. A constant quiver of the nostrils, an unconscious thrill of straining muscles, an instant promptitude to take fire, are characteristic of each. My portrait of Zohrab is but half fanciful, of course ; in drawing it I have before my eye a score of models ; amongst them, be it admitted with qualifications, that grandest of all savages I ever met, the Sheikh 'Mteyer, who betrayed his trust and did to death poor Palmer and Gill and Charrington. But if Zohrab was like what that old traitor had been in youth, it was in outward semblance only.

The stories he incessantly devised about the phantom castle and its indwellers made pleasant fooling for Suleyman and the servants. They had no other diversion, and they loved a tale. But all the while Zohrab was trying seriously to discover where dwelt the chief who was plotting for the great cause—who was also the father of Ferideh ; for his imagination had so mixed the two threads of romance that they became one. From the very first he had employed himself in urging the crew of the supply-ship to make inquiries in all quarters ; had shown them the mirage, made a drawing of the castle with exhaustive notes, and offered a moderate reward. The vessel hailed from Sûf, a very small Arabian port, which desert Bedouins seldom visited ; but it was the only channel of communication with the world. The Arabs were interested, of course, in a matter which had the savour of magic ; but for many succeeding months they brought no suggestion that would bear examination. At length the Reis reported with delight substantial news. A Bedouin, calling at Sûf, recognised the sketch at a glance. It represented El Husn, the fortress-palace of Sheikh Abou 'l Nasr (Father of Victory), which lies four days' journey across the desert from Sûf.

With this fact in hand, the Reis asked no more. Who had not heard of El Husn and the Sheikh Abou 'l Nasr ? Every Arab is familiar with these names. Zohrab had heard them often, and he asked particulars which any of the crew could furnish, subject

to correction. The Sheikh had been a Wahabi in youth, and taken part in the grand struggles which would have broken up the Turkish empire had the fanatics been less tigerish, and Ibrahim Pasha, the Arnaout, been less shrewd. After the collapse of that great movement, the Sheikh Abou 'l Nasr retired to his fortress with his share of the spoils of Mecca, Medina, and a hundred shrines plundered by the Wahabis. When Ibrahim was preparing to follow thither, Mehemet Ali recalled him for graver work. Abou 'l Nasr rested quiet awhile, maturing his plans, and giving himself to the study of magic, in which he was proficient beyond all men. When the Wahabis recovered heart, he was ready, with patriotic devotion unaffected, with treasure beyond counting, and supreme wisdom. All Arab people consulted him as an oracle of God. The Sheikh Abou 'l Nasr said, 'Fight here! Remove that man! Keep quiet there!' and always, when his command was followed, advantage ensued. He had ceased to be a Wahabi, smoking and drinking coffee, and doing what he pleased. The Arabs generally thought none the worse of him for that; and the Wahabis, though in their hearts resenting his apostasy, dared not quarrel with their great ally.

This detailed information stirred Zohrab to intense excitement. His daily thought and nightly dream were of visiting the Sheikh and offering his sword for freedom—and Ferideh. If the patriot chief were as tolerant as rumour reluctantly declared, his creed would be no bar to service. Whilst Zohrab was working himself up to action, his resolve was precipitated by events. His superiors invited him to join the Telegraph Service of Egypt, and they made so sure of acceptance that they despatched his successor the same day, giving Zohrab a month to arrange his affairs. That decided him. When the new clerk arrived by steamer, the supply-ship chanced to be in port. Its return voyage carried this romantic youth, his pony, and his carpet-bag to Sûf.

Disguised as a well-to-do Arab of the lower class he drew little notice. Sûf is a miserable place, inhabited by people calling themselves Bedouin, who live by fishing and petty piracy. They also grow the most attenuated crops recognised by science. But it is a central station for feeding telegraph posts and light-houses. A company of Turkish soldiers garrison it, and a good number of people, such as Zohrab seemed to be, are drawn thither on business. He found his way to the Medhafe, put up his pony, and visited the coffee-house after a frugal meal. It was a horrid



little den, windowless, black all over with dirt and smoke. Coffee was dispensed by a one-eyed negro, in cups that had not been washed for months. Zohrab had fallen into English ways so far, at least, that this return to native habits sickened him.

An old officer came bustling in, and demanded papers. He should have boarded the vessel, but he was asleep. Zohrab assumed an air of dignity, and accompanied him to the Medhafe. When the Captain read that this stranger was an Effendi in Government employ, he became anxiously deferential—awkward investigations impending! But Zohrab let it be understood that for grave and secret purposes he was instructed to visit El Husn, and asked for a guide. The officer looked startled.

‘Every man in this accursed place knows the way except my soldiers. The people are rebels and heretics every one! No guide would serve you without the Sheikh’s approval; and that, perhaps, you do not care to ask publicly? I thought not! Then, if I ordered one of these brutes to accompany you I might as well send a burying party as a rear-guard.’

‘I could go alone, if the road is easy.’

‘Easy enough, if you met no evil-minded persons. You are acquainted with the Wahabi signs? No? Then it is madness to proceed, Effendi!’

‘We were told that the Sheikh had abandoned his heresy.’

‘He?—he’s an infidel; may his father’s name be cursed! But those who go back and forward from El Husn are nearly all Wahabis, and it’s fifty to one you come across them.’

‘Can you not teach me the pass-words?’

‘Oh!’ said the Captain, suddenly blustering, ‘I’ve not neglected that duty. Wahabis have taken me for one of themselves—Allah forgive my sin! If you can recollect all I teach you, Effendi, there is no danger.’

So Zohrab learned his part, carefully overhauled his baggage, removing all that could raise suspicion, handed it to the officer for keeping, and stretched himself upon the earth, among the fleas. Then he stole away by moonlight. The soldiers, warned, let him pass the gate.

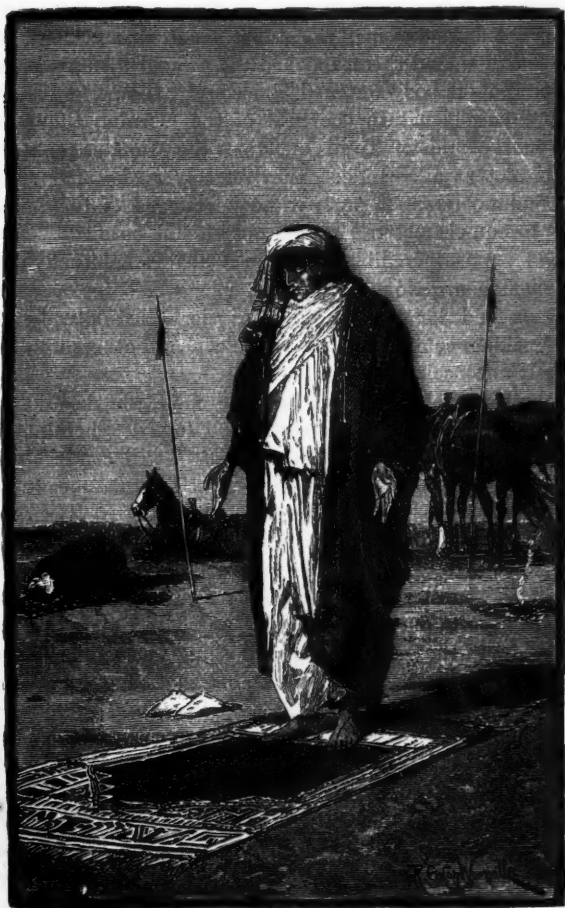
The first stage was long, but easy and not dangerous. Nevertheless, to be alone in the desert is terrible. Not a shadow in the landscape, save the traveller’s own, which his horse tramples wearily, with shuffling, noiseless feet. When the moon sank, Zohrab dismounted, waiting the dawn with his bridle in his hand.

That is a solemn pause, even if no danger threatens. The still night is busy with sounds, soft and mysterious, high up in air. They gather sometimes for a rush as of a mighty wind, but no breath stirs. Then, from the darkness, comes a sudden clang, ringing and sonorous, that makes the lonely watcher start to his arms. Zohrab had never known, or had forgotten, the rustling murmur of sand-grouse taking their early flight in thousands; the signals of wild geese, and the sharp, metallic cry of zikzak plovers. Um el Jemal was too barren even for those strong fliers. The dawn broke at last and he resumed his way, followed it whilst the sun climbed higher and higher, and pressed down on him like liquid heat. The sand-hills rolled away on either side, so smoothly monotonous that their crests blended into one another, and the world seemed flat. No landmarks but the crags on the horizon, at whose feet the mirage glistened. The vegetation was all burnt and sapless, showing the sand through its spiky, brittle twigs. No colour there but greys and browns and dusty yellows; but now and again a bone gleamed white, and Zohrab's high-strung nerves regarded it with a prescient thrill.

It was noon when he reached the termination of this stage. The pious soul who dug or restored a muddy, blessed puddle here had been commemorated by a Wely; but the Wahabis had passed that way, and after drinking had overthrown their benefactor's modest shrine for a superstitious monument. Zohrab plunged into the evil-smelling pond, beside his horse. Then, after the meal, he lay upon the glowing sand to sleep. The evening chill roused him suddenly, and they set off again. The second stage was traversed safely, but with worse alarms, for Zohrab thought he had lost his way. He reached the well early, drank, ate, and lay down. Wakened in the moonlight by the shrill neigh of his horse, he saw a little cavalcade approaching.

In the desert one cannot hide, and Zohrab lay still. The strangers drew up, looked at him, and dispersed to their camp duties. They were not Bedouins, for no camel followed them. After attending to their horses they sat down to eat, but two armed men quietly stationed themselves beside Zohrab. The moon vanished, but in the circle round a smouldering fire, torches were lit. He thought out the situation, rose like a man from sleep, and advanced with salaams. All eyed him gravely, but did not reply. He tried a Wahabi signal, which gained instant recognition. 'Sal Khayr!' said the chief courteously, piously avoiding

the name of Allah. Zohrab sat beside this chief, and the questioning began, but much less eager than is usual. His story was pat, for he had little to conceal besides his creed, and whilst their meal proceeded, a frugal repast of bread and rice, the Wahabis



listened with grave politeness. At the end all rose, with a low ejaculation of thankfulness to Allah. Zohrab rose also. 'Bind that spy!' the chief commanded. In an instant, Zohrab was stripped and tied, thrown upon the earth and left there.

The camp did not stir early. At the hour of morning prayer men released the prisoner, brought the carpet which he had thoughtfully provided, and went to their own devotions. Zohrab ought, I know, to have refused, and the story should end at this point with a harrowing narrative of his martyrdom. But my hero was not formed of martyr's stuff. He knelt and stood, folded his hands and spread them, touched the ground with his forehead, and so on. As nobody watched him closely, the performance did not cause suspicion. In the heat of the morning they started Zohrab in the midst. To his questions the Wahabis replied very briefly or not at all. Indeed they scarcely spoke among themselves, and no stronger proof could be alleged of the influence religion has on character. That Arabs should be silent and self-contained seems incredible, but the Wahabis habitually display this phenomenon. Now and then, after long brooding over earthly wickedness and heavenly joys, a warrior cried sharply 'Lah-Ullah!' seldom completing the formula. And others would take it up, half unconsciously.

At the halt, Zohrab approached the chief, who heard his reproaches unmoved. 'If you were going to visit Sheikh Abou 'l Nasr, you have no cause of complaint. I will conduct you to him!' No more words would he give, but the tone meant death.

The next march brought them within view of El Husn, so the Wahabis declared. Zohrab looked with all his power. Suppose that this place, to visit which he had probably sacrificed his life, were not the substance of his mirage dreams after all! So it appeared in truth, and his heart sickened. In the quarter where El Husn lay, as the guides alleged, nothing was visible but piles of crag; and there were no mountains in the vision. Zohrab keenly scrutinised the plain, but it lay yellow and bare to the very foot of those yellow barren hills. He had thrown away his life!

When still far from the crags, the party diverged towards a solitary mound. Two Arabs who had been lying on its crest rose to their feet and vanished. Presently they reappeared on horseback, galloping from the further side. At a furious pace some young Wahabis rode to meet them, whirling guns but not firing. All went on together to the well, talking eagerly. The remarks Zohrab overheard suggested that action was at hand. After spending the night at this halt, the Wahabis rode in a straight course for the hills. The sun was high when they reached a narrow gorge, so deep and so abrupt that it lay in shadow almost cool

whilst the crags glowed and burnt above. Massive sungas, works of rough stone piled up, flanked the entrance, and at every point of vantage above the winding road such defences were repeated. The Wahabis looked at them with interest, and the elders told legends of fight this gorge had witnessed.

A mile or two beyond its mouth the fortifications became continuous. Suddenly a valley opened, with palms and green specks of fields, and huts and black tents. At the further end, several miles away, shone the white dome of a mosque. And in front appeared the house of the mirage, on a terrace of the mountain. Zohrab gasped! It was no trick of the eye! In real stone and mortar, there stood the gateway and the battlements and the windows he had daily beheld four hundred miles away! There was the Sheikh in his black burnoos and bright handkerchief. There were the children playing on the terrace. Zohrab forgot the peril in which he lay. What could harm the man to whom such a miracle was vouchsafed!

Men clothed all in white came galloping from the tents and loudly welcomed their friends. Sheikh and girls vanished. Across the flat, up the hill side, the Wahabis advanced. As Zohrab came out upon the terrace he wondered whether Suleyman was watching now and smoking by the station door. About this hour the mirage appeared at Um el Jemal.

Servants took the horses of the chiefs, who went in, whilst their followers lay in the house shadow, eating, dreaming, and sleeping; so, many a time, had Zohrab seen the terrace occupied. Hour passed after hour, but he could neither eat nor sleep. Then two burly blacks called him. A few steps inside the arch, the roadway wheeled at right angles where a portcullis hung on rusty chains. Several meurtrières in either wall allowed the garrison to make a last resistance, behind the portcullis, though the gate were forced. Under the further arch Zohrab saw a courtyard with stalky flowers and channels for irrigation; beyond it, painted arcades, where sat the Wahabi chiefs in their snowy robes. But his conductors opened a narrow door in the thickness of the wall, and threw him in. The dreary place he entered was a guardroom, used as a prison. Light entered dimly from the meurtrières for a few hours on each side of noon. Eight or ten scarecrows in Turkish uniform lay round. Their eyes, feverishly bright, shone in the gloom. Zohrab addressed them eagerly, but they did not reply.

In a few moments the Wahabis passed, and smiled grimly as

they looked in. People came and went through the archway. Then dusk crept over the fetid den, though free men outside called it early afternoon. After some hours of impotent storming, Zohrab grew hungry, and asked his fellow-prisoners when food was served. A big-boned Turk who had been fat and jovial perhaps in other days, answered bitterly from the darkness, 'Those who enter here learn to live without eating!' It was excitement rather than hunger which Zohrab had suffered. But at the threat of starvation he suddenly famished. The Turks would not answer again.

The prison had long been black as a mine when servants arrived with torches. The negroes entered first, bound Zohrab and threw him into a corner. Then the others brought in food, a tiny mess of rice and a slab of unleavened bread for each prisoner—saving the last. They laughed to hear his cries for food and curses. When all the Turks had done, the slaves unbound Zohrab, and took the light away.

It is not strange nor painful for an Arab to fast a day and night. Under ordinary circumstances he will sleep through longer abstinence. But Zohrab's fervid imagination was moved here. That the realisation of his wildest hopes should mean a fate like this was hideous, monstrous. He could not sleep. Standing by a loophole he implored each passer-by to tell the Sheikh this and that. An endless time it seemed before the show of torches and the clash of the big doors told that real night had begun, and an endless time of horror succeeded before they clashed again, opening in the dawn which would not reach that prison-house for hours. Perhaps he had slept, but it was the sleep that fevers. All through the pitchy blackness, waking or dreaming, he had seen the white eyes of his companions who had learned to live without food. Sharp pains transfixed his body; blood rushed to his head with splitting vehemence and left it frozen. Zohrab was still far from delirium, but he heard familiar voices and raved in answer. The Turks watched him anxiously as the dim light spread. Horrid experience warned them that this newcomer might do mischief before he grew used to starve. No one else heeded him, save by a mocking word thrown in.

Evening was heralded by its chills. Zohrab had fallen beneath the loophole when the blacks entered suddenly, and threw themselves upon him. In spite of his desperate struggling they fixed the ropes, and food was served to the others. Then they held the



prisoner firmly whilst a slave untied him, and when the last knot was loosed they pitched him headlong with all their strength. When Zohrab recovered his feet they were laughing outside.

Such, then, was to be his fate—death by hunger, with torment added! After a mood of helpless agony furious raving got hold upon him. The Turks gathered in a feeble heap to defend themselves. At midnight, or near it, men came with lights. ‘The Sheikh summons you!’ they said, and led him out. That calmed him. Quietly he followed across the moonlit courtyard, through dusky alcoves, to an inner room, where sat an old but vigorous chief, warrior and statesman every inch. He smiled, took the narguilleh from his lips, and told the slaves to go.

‘Health to you, my son! Sit down!’

Zohrab was trying to collect his thoughts for this supreme crisis. But on the first effort of will he felt them escape, fly round, transform themselves and reappear, the same but in new shapes. They would not be held. Frightened, awestruck, by this revolt, Zohrab fell on the divan, without even kicking off his shoes. The Sheikh started in surprise. That act told more than he had looked to hear. The stranger was a Christian and a ‘personage.’ He smiled in scornful pity, but without change of tone asked whence Zohrab came.

The youth began his story, very slightly and innocently falsified. He described how the fame of the great Arab had reached him at Beyrout. But in this early stage his attention wandered. He found himself talking of home, of his mother and sisters—pulled up confused—began to tell of the mirage, and described Um el Jemal, with a minute but flighty sketch of his English superior.

The Sheikh smoked and listened pleasantly. He observed, ‘You do not mention your father—may his soul have found peace!’

‘He was killed by the Turks!’ Zohrab passionately shouted. ‘When people told me of Sheikh Abou ’l Nasr, I said, He is my father and my lord! I will go and fight the Turk with him! Oh, Sheikh, they starve me, and I could not get word with you! My blood is flame and my head a millstone with lightning in it! I am dying!’

‘Who told you the way hither?’

‘The Reis of our store-boat. I showed him your house and your image, and the Wahabis who came, and Ferideh—’

‘You showed him?’ began the Sheikh, astonished. ‘Who is Ferideh?’

'Your daughter! Oh, pardon me! I don't know what I say!' He threw himself along the divan, hysterically sobbing.

The Sheikh watched him thoughtfully, then clapped his hands and ordered bread and wine. Zohrab kissed his garments in the Oriental manner, not practised by this semi-Frank since childhood. He devoured the small cake, and looked for more. 'Drink!' the chief commanded, and he swallowed the measure in one gulp.

'Now finish your tale, my son!'

'My head is whirling! I do not remember!'

'You have told me you are a Christian of Beyrout, employed in the service of the Porte. You invoked certain powers to reach me. What are they?'

'Powers? You misunderstood, Sheikh, or I talked foolishness.'

'Nay, my son!' Then, looking fixedly at Zohrab, and making strange signs, he spoke in an unknown tongue. The youth felt a deeper thrill of alarm as the thought struck him that his mind was giving way. He sat with eyes dilated, panting.

After several essays, the Sheikh paused in bewilderment. 'What your power is I know not, my son, but it is inferior to mine. Instruct me, therefore!'

'I swear I do not know what you refer to, Sheikh.'

A sharp clang of brass resounded, and the negroes appeared. 'Throw this Turk over the cliff!' the Sheikh commanded; and in an instant Zohrab was overpowered and dragged out, yelling defiance and entreaties, through the archway to the moonlit platform. Lights gleamed at the windows, and heads appeared far above. Upon the very brink, Zohrab heard the Sheikh: 'Tell the truth!'

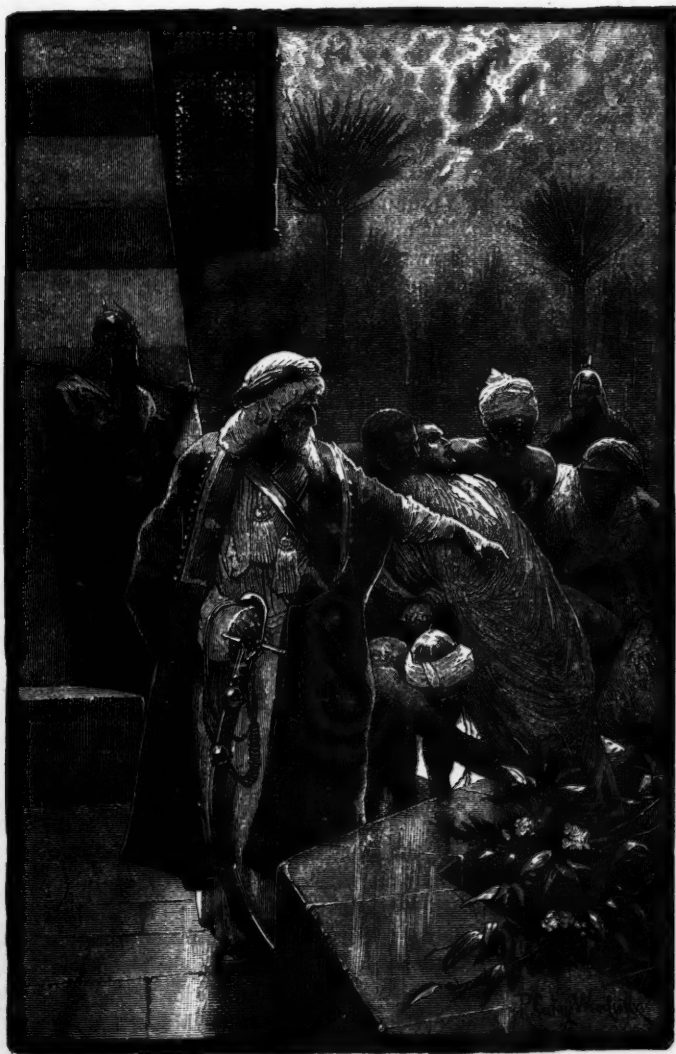
'By the God we both worship, I have told truth!'

'One—lift him on the parapet! Two—his feet! Throw his feet over. Well?'

But Zohrab did not reply. He was looking to Heaven with prayers.

'Father—father! not before our eyes!' cried a girl's voice from above. And Zohrab saw a lovely face outlined in the moonbeams at a window.

'Lift him back! Put him in a room to sleep.' And presently Zohrab, dazed and trembling in great shivers, lay on a carpet, with meat and wine beside him. It was long before he slept, and his dreams at first were of a thousand dreadful deaths. Towards morning he fell into heavy slumber.



The Sheikh sat beside him when he woke. After a moment's perplexity Zohrab sprang to his feet ready for a struggle.

‘I have taken counsel. Now tell what marvels you please, and I believe!’

‘You know I spoke the truth?’

‘I know that and more. But explain how you saw me and my house if it was not magic?’

In the sudden brightness of his spirits, a question rose to Zohrab’s lips why the occult powers had not cleared up this mystery also. But he refrained, and told about the mirage. The chief was interested, but uneasy. If his dwelling could be spied on hundreds of miles away, why not his defences? Zohrab reassured him partly, and he said in conclusion: ‘Now, Sheikh, will you enlist an infidel?’

‘If I enlist the Wahabi tiger for a good end, how can I refuse a Christian dog?’ he answered, smiling. ‘But those who would be served by men must lower themselves to serve prejudice and passion. Call yourself Aghile Agha, of Beyrout! I put this garrison in your charge, for other business absorbs my time. Lie quiet to-day. I will send you books.’

The Sheikh’s library was small, but characteristic: some poets, some works of unintelligible necromancy, the Campaigns of Zenghis Khan, and the autobiographies of his great descendants, Babar and Ackbar. The philosophy of these Moghul emperors, though timidly rendered by an orthodox translator, had evidently impressed the Sheikh. In a dozen loose notes Zohrab found its expression, which may be summarised briefly: ‘There is no God but one; the prophets of all creeds are his servants. There are devils beyond counting, but the man wise and just can sway them.’

Next day Zohrab took command of the garrison. It was no honorary charge. Every dweller in the valley capable of bearing arms was a retainer of the Sheikh. Fifty of them in rotation served at the castle, and all mustered for review at intervals. Drill is abhorrent to the Arab, as to the Turk; but these men, mostly veterans of fight, performed to admiration the simple tactics necessary for their warfare. They knew their place in the ranks, and would keep it; they would advance or retire as they got the word, obedient though not compact. Mechanical movements are not required in the desert.

For a while messengers and mysterious visitors arrived more thickly. Every day armed men encamped upon the terrace—Wahabi or other—whilst their chiefs took counsel within. Owing

to this invasion, doubtless, the women of the household never came out on this side. They had another space for airing; and Zohrab knew they used it. In his room sometimes he heard merry voices, and scoldings, and the wail of little girls whose ears are boxed. His apartment had windows, high above the floor, that looked on the harem playground. Zohrab was sorely tempted to climb up, and it was not the certainty of death, if caught, that checked him. He listened for an individual voice that should speak to his heart, and sometimes he thought to recognise it. Remembering that if he could not see Ferideh, she could see him at any time, he kept himself neat and soldierlike.

After awhile the visits became less frequent. For a day, then two days, no cavalcade was signalled from the desert mound which Zohrab remembered so painfully. He heard the men discussing this change, from which they drew conclusions. One morning he sought the Sheikh, who was pondering and reckoning as usual.

‘My father, you won the name of the Victorious in youth. Full of honours and renown you may rest at ease, directing those who fight. But we are young! Give me the untried warriors in your tents, and let us go.’

‘Take two hundred, and march on Sûf. You may have an opportunity to prove yourselves men, for the Turks are reinforced to-day. Hold that place to the death, my son!’

‘Do the Turks project a landing in force?’

‘You have a shrewd intelligence, Aghile Agha. Yes! When they have put out the fire I have raised they will march on El Husn. The result is in God’s hand. He has given me many years of peace!’

‘You speak as if the cause would certainly be defeated, Sheikh! Why do you despair?’

‘I do not despair, but I know. The time is not revealed. We should hold out more than a year in the South.’

‘Then we should hold out for ever if you took the field, Sheikh,’ said Zohrab timidly.

‘No; I can command the Wahabis from a distance, but I cannot serve with them, nor they with me.’

‘I understand. But if you know that with such instruments victory is impossible, why employ them, Sheikh? I ask the foolish question of your wisdom.’

‘My son, the mason takes a rough tool to split the stone which he will cut and fashion with tempered steel.—There are old guns

buried in Sûf; the people will show them you. Fortify; mount them; have all prepared. When the time comes I will march thither with two thousand men.'

'It is impossible the Turks should come by land?'

'What Ibrahim Pasha dared not try, Turks will not venture! And now,' the Sheikh added, with pleasant significance, 'does Zohrab Effendi still dream of Ferideh?'

Zohrab coloured furiously, but he tried to answer in the same tone: 'Aghile Agha dreams no more!'

The Sheikh smiled now. 'Then let us look for Ferideh together with our eyes open!'

Zohrab was transfixed. Such invitations are not unknown in legend, or even in history; but those who give them are reckless debauchees, or despots above the canons of propriety. But the Sheikh waited with a dignified kindness, as unlike the air of a drunkard as of a madman. Zohrab still hesitated.

'Why, my son, if I visited you in Beyrout, would you not present your sisters to me? And, if I visited the Queen of Frangistan, would she not show me all the ladies of her realm? Are we Moslem beasts, or our women unclean?'

'Oh, Sheikh!' cried Zohrab, stepping forward, 'there are no Moslem like you!'

'Nay, you do not know! Very many good Moslem have broken a law, suited perhaps to the time, but foolish now, to secure the happiness of those they love!'

In speaking he led the way through bare stone passages, with massive doors at every turning, useful if the walls were carried by a rush of Bedouins, but valueless against a disciplined foe. They came out in a grated chamber, where girlish voices sounded close. Zohrab's heart beat wildly as he took place behind the Sheikh and looked. Five girls of different ages were seated on the ground, vociferously playing at some game. Younger children toddled about, and three women sat languid in the shade. 'Not one son!' the Sheikh bitterly muttered, but he recovered his good humour on the instant. 'Now, Zohrab Effendi, is Ferideh there?'

'Oh, yes, father. That is she—the loveliest of all!'

The Sheikh laughed softly. 'You must be more explicit to a parent. Which is the loveliest of all?'

'Oh, you are mocking. She in the gold scarf and blue trousers, with the snood of coins in her loose hair! See! she has fallen over, laughing! Her slipper has dropped off. What a lovely foot!'



'That, Ferideh? Regard the others! They are older and more beautiful!'

'Not for me. Oh, Sheikh, our souls are one!'

'But it was not your Ferideh who called that night when you fancied yourself already dead!'

'She was not there or she was asleep! Oh, father, you will not break your word!'

'No! Perhaps it is best. My little Zireh will not be impatient whilst her betrothed is absent in the wars. Then let us go.'

'You are displeased. Believe me I would choose another if I could.'

The Sheikh laughed so loud that his old walls re-echoed. 'I see how impossible it is now you are awake, Aghile Agha. Take comfort; the child is yours when these troubles are past, and you return.'

'Oh, my father! Will you tell her she is destined for me?'

'No; for Zireh is young, too young for trouble; and no man can tell his own fate or another's when balls are flying. But you shall see her again the day you leave.'

'Allah will be kind to you, Sheikh, who are so kind to men. When shall I go?'

'Choose your companions and bring the list to me.'

All was ready in three days. As Zohrab stood upon the terrace after a last parade, the Sheikh took him by the arm and led the way to a chamber which he entered first. A little figure sprang from the divan, in a whirl of hair, to throw itself into his arms.

'Is this proper conduct in the presence of a stranger, you wild gazelle?' said the chief laughing. 'Put on your veil.'

Pouting and blushing, but not much abashed, Zireh covered her face; the proprieties becoming a young girl were not yet familiar. Zohrab saw again the features, lean and clear but not sharp, the eyes so dark and shadowed that light sparkled in them as on the facet of a black diamond, the pink-purple mouth; the slender figure too, outlined in a robe of thinnest silk, crossed on the bosom, tightly swathed by a scarf upon the hips. Zireh looked at him when the veil was adjusted with the boldness of petulant childhood, discontentedly, askance; but the young man's expression had such eager fire that she dropped her gaze, and raised it angrily, and looked to her father, bewildered.

'This youth, Zireh, is Aghile Agha, upon whose courage and discretion the safety of us all may depend. Now leave us, child.'

Zireh looked puzzled as she withdrew, with a touch of her forehead and a bow to the stranger. At the door she glanced up under her thick lashes, caught his eye again, and hastily went out.

'I know—I know,' the Sheikh ejaculated, 'I hold a hostage dearer to you than life! Now to business. Three days ago I dismissed my Turkish prisoners secretly. You will hear from them on your road, I doubt not. When the swine have delivered Sûf into your hands, give them five hundred liras and help them to get away.'

Had I dared to violate truth I should have liked to record that Zohrab's first act after gaining favour had been to procure the release of these fellow-prisoners. So an Englishman or a Christian would have behaved towards his bitterest personal foe perhaps. But my characters are Arab, with Arab ways of virtue as of error. Zohrab had given the Turks no thought of kindness. He said, 'Have they strength to reach Sûf?'

'Oh, I have fed them till they are lusty as young camels, and Turks can always find strength for the devil's work.'

Zohrab started next day. At the second halt he received a communication. Yielding to alarm and greed the commandant betrayed his post. Before dawn next day the Arabs crept to a gate which they found unlocked, and carried the town. The Turkish soldiers fought and died; the superior officers surrendered, took the wages of their treachery, and embarked in the afternoon.

Then Zohrab began his work with zeal, repairing the old fortifications, building new, and mounting guns. Fortunately, the Turks were occupied down south, and their vessels only threw a dozen shells into the place in passing. Zohrab had a thousand cares and projects, but very few hands to execute his schemes. Time went by quickly, month after month. News arrived constantly from El Husn, and rumours came by sea. The rebellion followed its usual course. The Arabs, mustering silently, overpowered small Turkish garrisons, swept the edge of the cultivated land, and mastered the oases. The enemy concentrated, yielding whole provinces to the rush. Then the reaction set in. The wilder people of the desert tired, and made off with their plunder. The Wahabis, unrestrained, sacked mosques, overthrew shrines, murdered priests, and persecuted the orthodox. When the Turks began to move, no force remained to oppose them face to face,

Desperate forays were made in their rear, and small parties were cut off, but district by district they regained the country. After twelve months, though the struggle was not finished, nor will be so long as the Turkish dominion lasts, it had ceased to be war. Then, if the Sheikh were well-advised by his agents or his familiar spirits, the peril of El Husn was nigh.

In his letters Zohrab had not breathed a hint of the matter nearest his heart. And the Sheikh, though liberal in his ideas, would have thought it shocking to mention a girl. One day pressing news arrived. The Turks were collecting an army to reduce the Wahabi stronghold of Wady Afre, as they gave out. But Abou 'l Nasr was assured that they purposed attacking him. On an advance by land nobody had counted. He had strong hopes of resisting successfully behind his desert barrier, but as a measure of precaution he sent his harem and valuables to Sûf. Solemnly the old chief commended them to Allah and his friend. Two days afterwards the caravan arrived, a score of women and children, with many camel loads of property. The men who guarded it returned, leaving a few veterans to guard their master's family. Zohrab gave up his quarters to the ladies; amongst their dark eyes, still swollen with tears and alarm, he recognised Zireh's. But they did not look at him.

Of all the weary months of Zohrab's exile it was the longest that followed this event. He did not once see the girl now sleeping under his roof, and the merest propriety forbade him to seek communication with her, had any means come to hand. The Sheikh reported almost daily, and his news, though calmly told, was alarming. The party he had sent to destroy the wells upon the route the Turks must follow had been driven back by Bedouins. The schemes for a diversion had failed. None but his immediate retainers stood by the Sheikh, and the enemy were getting into motion. Forgetting all else in a generous enthusiasm, Zohrab begged to be relieved, that he might conquer or die with his benefactor, but the refusal was peremptory. At the same time the Sheikh wrote to his head wife, Zireh's mother. She came to the lieutenant, veiled and weeping, and put into his hand the letter she could not read. He pressed it to his lips and brow and heart. The Sheikh enjoined upon his wife to obey Zohrab as she did himself and to love him as her son; for he, as Zireh's husband, should be recognised as the head of the family.

'You to be our son! You!—a stranger who keeps here in

safety whilst my lord is struggling for life!' So the fiery old dame went on. Zohrab read all the letters to her, and at length she owned with sobs that the Sheikh was wise for the children's sake. She would obey.

For a whole week there was silence. Scouts despatched did not return; the garrison became demoralised, and every night there were desertions. Zohrab made his arrangements for the worst. The Sheikh had supplied him with ample funds. He chartered the store-ship, which no longer supplied Um el Jemal, and equipped it for female passengers. Then he loaded the treasure and baggage, in charge of the trusty veterans, and waited. At length two horsemen rode in with a brief letter. After two days' fight, the Sheikh reported, the passes had been forced. Whilst he wrote, the Turkish column was pouring into the valley. Zohrab was solemnly commanded to take ship at once and sail for Aden, where, if by miracle the Sheikh escaped, he would rejoin his family. But he bade them all good-bye, and commanded them to the merciful God.

The evil news had spread before Zohrab gained the street. His soldiers were looting on every side. He ran to his former quarters, and shouted for the head-wife. Frightened slaves shut the door in his face. Time pressed cruelly. As the soldiers gathered their load of worthless plunder—each religiously avoiding houses where he individually had eaten bread—they made off for the desert; and as their numbers lessened the townspeople became more threatening. Zohrab hammered at the gate, and some scores of Arabs swiftly collected, full of mischief and revenge. Then he shouted for Zireh; and suddenly the door opened—she stood shrinking before him. 'Where is your mother? Quick!' But the throng behind crushed in, and the girl sunk fainting in his arms. Zohrab shot down the foremost, and, as the others pressed back, he caught up his bride, ran to the zenana—and found it empty! Dropping Zireh on the floor, he hurried out. But the courtyard and the passages were now full of Arabs, shrieking, yelling, rushing hither and thither. If there were women's cries in that tumult they could not be heard. Zohrab did not hesitate! Nothing remained but to die, since he had failed to save. But as he gathered his weight for the rush, girlish arms caught him fast.

'Oh, save me, Aghile Agha! Save me! Save me!'

Zohrab looked. When love pleads with youth, honour which



commands to refuse and die must be stronger than is found in the Arab's fiery blood. Zohrab carried her back, lifted her

through a window, and they ran to the shore. There a boat was waiting, with half a dozen of the guard. Zohrab took four, and returned to meet the whole body of townsmen, armed now and triumphant. The struggle was brief and desperate. With one surviving comrade, Zohrab fought his way back. He gained the ship, which set sail for Aden.

There Zireh was placed in charge of mission ladies before her bodyguard knew what was doing. A handsome draft on the Sheikh's treasure comforted their bodies, not their souls. They would have liked to raise a riot, but the police damped their ardour. When Zireh's eyes had been opened to some elementary ideas of life in this world and that to come, Zohrab confessed himself a Christian. The surprise was not painful; for experience of English ways had shown the girl that Christians are not unclean and miserable outcasts of humanity. So soon as he assured her that the Sheikh knew his religion, Zireh was quite content; and in no long time she professed herself a Christian—a bad one, I fear, regarded dogmatically, but gentle, compassionate, and pure.

They remained twelve months at Aden; but no news came of the Sheikh or his family. When that date was passed, Zohrab spoke of marriage, and he met no plea for delay—that would not occur to an Arab maiden if, by such unheard-of chance as this, she were left to speak for herself. The ceremony was performed in the garrison church, amid such universal interest, such attentions to the pretty bride from the highest quarters, and such military display as would alone have made it the happiest event of their lives. A week afterwards they sailed for India, and Zohrab is now high in the Telegraph Service of the Nizam, where he finds a few Arabs to talk with and many to avoid.



## THE BACKSLIDER.



**T**HERE was much stir and commotion on the night of Thursday, January the 14th, 1874, in the Gideonite Apostolic Church, number 47, Walworth Lane, Peckham, S.E. Anybody could see at a glance that some important business was under consideration ; for the Apostle was there himself, in his chair of presidency, and the twelve Episcops were there, and the forty-eight Presbyters, and a large and earnest gathering of the Gideonite laity. It was only a small bare school-room,

fitted with wooden benches, was that headquarters station of the young Church ; but you could not look around it once without seeing that its occupants were of the sort by whom great religious revolutions may be made or marred. For the Gideonites were one of those strange enthusiastic hole-and-corner sects that spring up naturally in the outlying suburbs of great thinking centres. They gather around the marked personality of some one ardent, vigorous, half-educated visionary ; and they consist for the most part of intelligent, half-reasoning people, who are bold enough to cast overboard the dogmatic beliefs of their fathers, but not so bold as to exercise their logical faculty upon the fundamental basis on which the dogmas originally rested. The Gideonites had thus collected around the fixed centre of their Apostle, a retired attorney, Murgess by name, whose teaching commended itself to their groping reason as the pure outcome of faithful biblical research ; and they had chosen their name because, though they were but three hundred in number, they had full confidence that when the time came they would blow their trumpets, and all the host of Midian would be scattered before them. In fact, they divided the world

generally into Gideonite and Midianite, for they knew that he that was not with them was against them. And no wonder, for the people of Peckham did not love the struggling Church. Its chief doctrine was one of absolute celibacy, like the Shakers of America; and to this doctrine the Church had testified in the Old Kent Road and elsewhere after a vigorous practical fashion that roused the spirit of South-eastern London into the fiercest opposition. The young men and maidens, said the Apostle, must no longer marry or be given in marriage; the wives and husbands must dwell asunder; and the earth must be made as an image of heaven. These were heterodox opinions, indeed, which South-eastern London could only receive with a strenuous counterblast of orthodox brickbats and sound Anglican road metal.

The fleece of wool was duly laid upon the floor; the trumpet and the lamp were placed upon the bare wooden reading desk; and the Apostle, rising slowly from his seat, began to address the assembled Gideonites.

'Friends,' he said, in a low clear, impressive voice, with a musical ring tempering its slow distinctness, 'we have met together to-night to take counsel with one another upon a high matter. It is plain to all of us that the work of the Church in the world does not prosper as it might prosper were the charge of it in worthier hands. We have to contend against great difficulties. We are not among the rich or the mighty of the earth; and the poor whom we have always with us do not listen to us. It is expedient, therefore, that we should set some one among us aside to be instructed thoroughly in those things that are most commonly taught among the Midianites at Oxford or Cambridge. To some of you it may seem, as it seemed at first to me, that such a course would involve going back upon the very principles of our constitution. We are not to overcome Midian by our own hand, nor by the strength of two and thirty thousand, but by the trumpet, and the pitcher, and the cake of barley bread. Yet, when I searched and inquired after this matter, it seemed to me that we might also err by overmuch confidence on the other side. For Moses, who led the people out of Egypt, was made ready for the task by being learned in all the learning of the Egyptians. Daniel, who testified in the captivity, was cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and instructed in the wisdom and tongue of the Chaldeans. Paul, who was the apostle of the Gentiles, had not only sat at the feet of Gamaliel, but was also able

from their own poets and philosophers to confute the sophisms and subtleties of the Grecians themselves. These things show us that we should not too lightly despise even worldly learning and worldly science. Perhaps we have gone wrong in thinking too little of such dross, and being puffed up with spiritual pride. The world might listen to us more readily if we had one who could speak the word for us in the tongues understood of the world.'

As he paused, a hum of acquiescence went round the room.

'It has seemed to me, then,' the Apostle went on, 'that we ought to choose some one among our younger brethren, upon whose shoulders the cares and duties of the Apostolate might hereafter fall. We are a poor people, but by subscription among ourselves we might raise a sufficient sum to send the chosen person first to a good school here in London, and afterwards to the University of Oxford. It may seem a doubtful and a hazardous thing thus to stake our future upon any one young man; but then we must remember that the choice will not be wholly or even mainly ours; we will be guided and directed as we ever are in the laying on of hands. To me, considering this matter thus, it has seemed that there is one youth in our body who is specially pointed out for this work. Only one child has ever been born into the Church: he, as you know, is the son of brother John Owen and sister Margaret Owen, who were received into the fold just six days before his birth. Paul Owen's very name seems to many of us, who take nothing for chance but all things for divinely ordered, to mark him out at once as a foreordained Apostle. Is it your wish, then, Presbyter John Owen, to dedicate your only son to this ministry?'

Presbyter John Owen rose from the row of seats assigned to the forty-eight, and moved hesitatingly towards the platform. He was an intelligent-looking, honest-faced, sunburnt working-man, a mason by trade, who had come into the Church from the Baptist society; and he was awkwardly dressed in his Sunday clothes, with the scrupulous clumsy neatness of a respectable artisan who expects to take part in an important ceremony. He spoke nervously and with hesitation, but with all the transparent earnestness of a simple, enthusiastic nature.

'Apostle and friends,' he said, 'it ain't very easy for me to disentangle my feelins on this subjec' from one another. I hope I ain't moved by any worldly feelin', an' yet I hardly know how to

keep such considerations out, for there's no denyin' that it would be a great pleasure to me and to his mother to see our Paul becomin' a teacher in Israel, and receivin' an education such as you, Apostle, has pinte out. But we hope, too, we ain't insensible to the good of the Church and the advantage that it might derive from our Paul's support and preachin'. We can't help seein' ourselves that the lad has got abilities; and we've tried to train him up from his youth upward, like Timothy, for the furtherance of the right doctrine. If the Church thinks he's fit for the work laid upon him, his mother and me'll be glad to dedicate him to the service.'

He sat down awkwardly, and the Church again hummed its approbation in a suppressed murmur. The Apostle rose once more, and briefly called on Paul Owen to stand forward.

In answer to the call, a tall, handsome, earnest-eyed boy advanced timidly to the platform. It was no wonder that those enthusiastic Gideonite visionaries should have seen in his face the visible stamp of the Apostleship. Paul Owen had a rich crop of dark-brown glossy and curly hair, cut something after the Florentine Cinque-cento fashion—not because his parents wished him to look artistic, but because that was the way in which they had seen the hair dressed in all the sacred pictures that they knew; and Margaret Owen, the daughter of some Wesleyan Spitalfields weaver folk, with the imaginative Huguenot blood still strong in her veins, had made up her mind ever since she became Convinced of the Truth (as their phrase ran) that her Paul was called from his cradle to a great work. His features were delicately chiselled, and showed rather natural culture, like his mother's, than rough honesty, like John Owen's, or of strong individuality, like the masterful Apostle's. His eyes were peculiarly deep and luminous, with a far-away look which might have reminded an artist of the central boyish figure in Holman Hunt's picture of the Doctors in the Temple. And yet Paul Owen had a healthy colour in his cheek and a general sturdiness of limb and muscle which showed that he was none of your nervous, bloodless, sickly idealists, but a wholesome English peasant boy of native refinement and delicate sensibilities. He moved forward with some natural hesitation before the eyes of so many people—ay, and what was more terrible, of the entire Church upon earth; but he was not awkward and constrained in his action like his father. One could see that he was sustained in the prominent part he took that morning by the

consciousness of a duty he had to perform and a mission laid upon him which he must not reject.

‘Are you willing, my son Paul,’ asked the Apostle, gravely, ‘to take upon yourself the task that the Church proposes?’

‘I am willing,’ answered the boy in a low voice, ‘grace preventing me.’

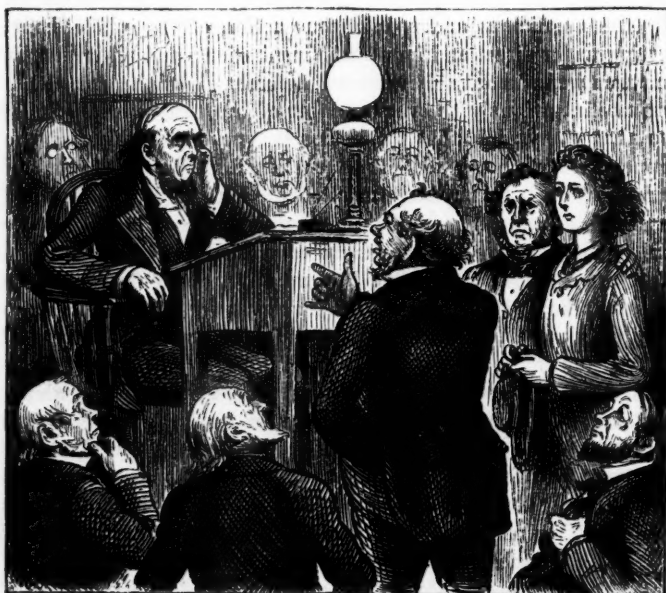
‘Does all the Church unanimously approve the election of our brother Paul to this office?’ the Apostle asked formally; for it was a rule with the Gideonites that nothing should be done except by the unanimous and spontaneous action of the whole body, acting under direct and immediate inspiration; and all important matters were accordingly arranged beforehand by the Apostle in private interviews with every member of the Church individually, so that everything that took place in public assembly had the appearance of being wholly unquestioned. They took counsel first with one another, and consulted the Scripture together; and when all private doubts were satisfied, they met as a Church to ratify in solemn conclave their separate conclusions. It was not often that the Apostle did not have his own way. Not only had he the most marked personality and the strongest will, but he alone also had Greek and Hebrew enough to appeal always to the original word; and that mysterious amount of learning, slight as it really was, sufficed almost invariably to settle the scruples of his wholly ignorant and pliant disciples. Reverence for the literal Scripture in its primitive language was the corner-stone of the Gideonite Church; and for all practical purposes, its one depositary and exponent for them was the Apostle himself. Even the Rev. Albert Barnes’s Commentary was held to possess an inferior authority.

‘The Church approves,’ was the unanimous answer.

‘Then, Episcops, Presbyters, and brethren,’ said the Apostle, taking up a roll of names, ‘I have to ask that you will each mark down on this paper opposite your own names how much a year you can spare of your substance for six years to come as a guarantee fund for this great work. You must remember that the ministry of this church has cost you nothing; freely I have received and freely given; do you now bear your part in equipping a new aspirant for the succession to the Apostolate.’

The two senior Episcops took two rolls from his hand, and went round the benches with a stylographic pen (so strangely do the ages mingle—Apostles and stylographs) silently asking each to put down his voluntary subscription. Meanwhile the Apostle

read slowly and reverently a few appropriate sentences of Scripture. Some of the richer members—well-to-do small tradesmen of Peckham—put down a pound or even two pounds apiece; the poorer brethren wrote themselves down for ten shillings or even five. In the end the guarantee list amounted to 195*l.* a year. The Apostle reckoned it up rapidly to himself, and then announced the result to the assembly, with a gentle smile relaxing his austere countenance. He was well pleased, for the sum was



quite sufficient to keep Paul Owen two years at school in London and then send him comfortably if not splendidly to Oxford. The boy had already had a fair education in Latin and some Greek, at the Birkbeck Schools; and with two years' further study he might even gain a scholarship (for he was a bright lad), which would materially lessen the expense to the young Church. Unlike many prophets and enthusiasts, the Apostle was a good man of business; and he had taken pains to learn all about these favourable chances before embarking his people on so very doubtful a speculation.



The Assembly was just about to close, when one of the Presbyters rose unexpectedly to put a question which, contrary to the usual practice, had not already been submitted for approbation to the Apostle. He was a hard-headed, thickset, vulgar-looking man, a greengrocer at Denmark Hill, and the Apostle always looked upon him as a thorn in his side, promoted by inscrutable wisdom to the Presbytery for the special purpose of keeping down the Apostle's spiritual pride.

'One more pint, Apostle,' he said abruptly, 'afore we close. It seems to me that even in the Church's work we'd ought to be business-like. Now, it ain't business-like to let this young man, Brother Paul, get his eddication out of us, if I may so speak afore the Church, on spec. It's all very well our sayin' he's to be eddicated and take on the Apostleship, but how do we know but what when he's had his eddication he may fall away and become a backslider, like Demas and like others among ourselves that we could mention? He may go to Oxford among a lot of Midianites, and them of the great an' mighty of the earth too, and how do we know but what he may round upon the Church, and go back upon us after we've paid for his eddication? So what I want to ask is just this, can't we bind him down in a bond that if he don't take the Apostleship with the consent of the Church when it falls vacant he'll pay us back our money, so as we can eddicate up another as 'll be more worthy?'

The Apostle moved uneasily in his chair; but before he could speak, Paul Owen's indignation found voice, and he said out his say boldly before the whole assembly, blushing crimson with mingled shame and excitement as he did so. 'If Brother Grimshaw and all the brethren think so ill of me that they cannot trust my honesty and honour,' he said, 'they need not be at the pains of educating me. I will sign no bond and enter into no compact. But if you suppose that I will be a backslider, you do not know me, and I will confer no more with you upon the subject.'

'My son Paul is right,' the Apostle said, flushing up in turn at the boy's audacity; 'we will not make the affairs of the Spirit a matter for bonds and earthly arrangements. If the Church thinks as I do, you will all rise up.'

All rose except Presbyter Grimshaw. For a moment there was some hesitation, for the rule of the Church in favour of unanimity was absolute; but the Apostle fixed his piercing eyes on Job Grimshaw, and after a minute or so Job Grimshaw too

rose slowly, like one compelled by an unseen power, and cast in his vote grudgingly with the rest. There was nothing more said about signing an agreement.

## II.

Meenie Bolton had counted a great deal upon her visit to Oxford, and she found it quite as delightful as she had anticipated. Her brother knew such a nice set of men, especially Mr. Owen, of Christchurch. Meenie had never been so near falling in love



with anybody in her life as she was with Paul Owen. He was so handsome and so clever, and then there was something so romantic about this strange Church they said he belonged to. Meenie's father was a country parson, and the way in which Paul shrank from talking about the Rector, as if his office were something wicked or uncanny, piqued and amused her. There was an heretical tinge about him which made him doubly interesting to the Rector's daughter. The afternoon water party that eventful Thursday, down to Nuneham, she looked forward to with the deepest interest. For her aunt, the Professor's wife, who was to

take charge of them, was certainly the most delightful and most sensible of chaperons.

'Is it really true, Mr. Owen,' she said, as they sat together for ten minutes alone after their picnic luncheon, by the side of the weir under the shadow of the Nuneham beeches—'is it really true that this Church of yours doesn't allow people to marry?'

Paul coloured up to his eyes as he answered, 'Well, Miss Bolton, I don't know that you should identify me too absolutely with my Church. I was very young when they selected me to go to Oxford, and my opinions have decidedly wavered a good deal lately. But the Church certainly does forbid marriage. I have always been brought up to look upon it as sinful.'

Meenie laughed aloud; and Paul, to whom the question was no laughing matter but a serious point of conscientious scruple, could hardly help laughing with her, so infectious was that pleasant ripple. He checked himself with an effort, and tried to look serious. 'Do you know,' he said, 'when I first came to Christchurch, I doubted even whether I ought to make your brother's acquaintance, because he was a clergyman's son. I was taught to describe clergymen always as priests of Midian.' He never talked about his Church to anybody at Oxford, and it was a sort of relief to him to speak on the subject to Meenie, in spite of her laughing eyes and undisguised amusement. The other men would have laughed at him too, but their laughter would have been less sympathetic.

'And do you think them priests of Midian still?' asked Meenie.

'Miss Bolton,' said Paul, suddenly, as one who relieves his overburdened mind by a great effort, 'I am almost moved to make a confidante of you.'

'There is nothing I love better than confidences,' Meenie answered; and she might truthfully have added, 'particularly from you.'

'Well, I have been passing lately through a great many doubts and difficulties. I was brought up by my Church to become its next Apostle, and I have been educated at their expense both in London and here. You know,' Paul added with his innate love of telling out the whole truth, 'I am not a gentleman; I am the son of poor working people in London.'

'Tom told me who your parents were,' Meenie answered simply; 'but he told me, too, you were none the less a true gentleman born for that; and I see myself he told me right.'

Paul flushed again—he had a most unmanly trick of flushing up—and bowed a little timid bow. ‘Thank you,’ he said quietly. ‘Well, while I was in London I lived entirely among my own people, and never heard anything talked about except our own doctrines. I thought our Apostle the most learned, the wisest, and the greatest of men. I had not a doubt about the absolute infallibility of our own opinions. But ever since I came to Oxford I have slowly begun to hesitate and to falter. When I came up first, the men laughed at me a good deal in a good-humoured way, because I wouldn’t do as they did. Then I thought myself persecuted for the truth’s sake, and was glad. But the men were really very kind and forbearing to me; they never argued with me or bullied me; they respected my scruples, and said nothing more about it as soon as they found out what they really were. That was my first stumbling-block. If they had fought me and debated with me, I might have stuck to my own opinions by force of opposition. But they turned me in upon myself completely by their silence, and mastered me by their kindly forbearance. Point by point I began to give in, till now I hardly know where I am standing.’

‘You wouldn’t join the cricket club at first, Tom says.’

‘No, I wouldn’t. I thought it wrong to walk in the ways of Midian. But gradually I began to argue myself out of my scruples, and now I positively pull six in the boat, and wear a Christchurch ribbon on my hat. I have given up protesting against having my letters addressed to me as Esquire (though I have really no right to the title), and I nearly went the other day to have some cards engraved with my name as “Mr. Paul Owen.” I’m afraid I’m backsliding terribly.’

Meenie laughed again. ‘If that is all you have to burden your conscience with,’ she said, ‘I don’t think you need spend many sleepless nights.’

‘Quite so,’ Paul answered, smiling; ‘I think so myself. But that is not all. I have begun to have serious doubts about the Apostle himself and the whole Church altogether. I have been three years at Oxford now; and while I was reading for Mods, I don’t think I was so unsettled in my mind. But since I have begun reading philosophy for my Greats, I have had to go into all sorts of deep books—Mill, and Spencer, and Bain, and all kinds of fellows who really think about things, you know, down to the very bottom—and an awful truth begins to dawn upon me, that our

Apostle is after all only a very third-rate type of a thinker. Now that, you know, is really terrible.'

'I don't see why,' Meenie answered demurely. She was beginning to get genuinely interested.

'That is because you have never had to call in question a cherished and almost ingrown faith. You have never realised any similar circumstances. Here am I, brought up by these good, honest, earnest people, with their own hard-earned money, as a pillar of their belief. I have been taught to look upon myself as the chosen advocate of their creed, and on the Apostle as an almost divinely inspired man. My whole life has been bound up in it; I have worked and read night and day in order to pass high and do honour to the Church; and now what do I begin to find the Church really is? A petty group of poor, devoted, enthusiastic, ignorant people, led blindly by a decently instructed but narrow-minded teacher, who has mixed up his own headstrong self-conceit and self-importance with his peculiar ideas about abstract religion.' Paul paused, half-surprised at himself, for, though he had doubted before, he had never ventured till that day to formulate his doubts, even to himself, in such plain and straightforward language.

'I see,' said Meenie, gravely; 'you have come into a wider world; you have mixed with wider ideas; and the wider world has converted you, instead of your converting the world. Well, that is only natural. Others beside you have had to change their opinions.'

'Yes, yes; but for me it is harder—oh! so much harder.'

'Because you have looked forward to being an Apostle?'

'Miss Bolton, you do me injustice—not in what you say, but in the tone you say it in. No, it is not the giving up of the Apostleship that troubles me, though I did hope that I might help in my way to make the world a new earth; but it is the shock and downfall of their hopes to all those good, earnest people, and especially—oh! especially, Miss Bolton, to my own dear father and mother.' His eyes filled with tears as he spoke.

'I can understand,' said Meenie, sympathetically, her eyes dimming a little in response. 'They have set their hearts all their lives long on your accomplishing this work, and it will be to them the disappointment of a cherished romance.'

They looked at one another a few minutes in silence.

'How long have you begun to have your doubts?' Meenie asked after the pause.

'A long time, but most of all since I saw you. It has made me—it has made me hesitate more about the fundamental article of our faith. Even now, I am not sure whether it is not wrong of me to be talking so with you about such matters.'

'I see,' said Meenie, a little more archly; 'it comes perilously near——' and she broke off, for she felt she had gone a step too far.

'Perilously near falling in love,' Paul continued boldly, turning his big eyes full upon her. 'Yes, perilously near.'

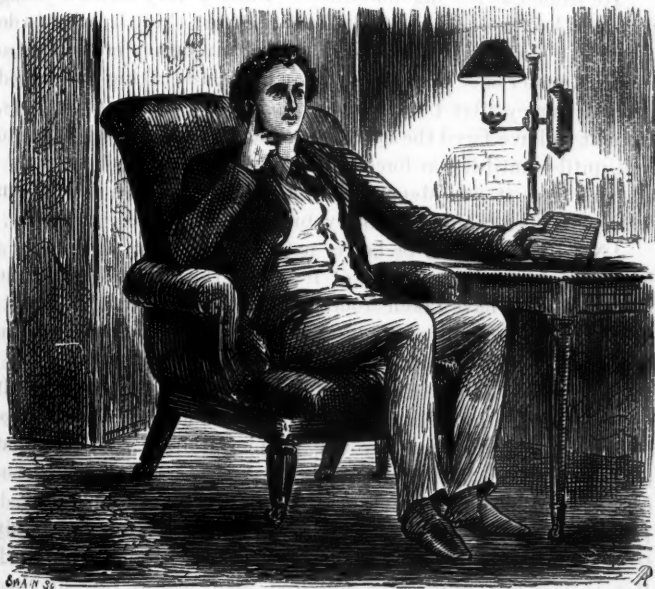
Their eyes met; Meenie's fell; and they said no more. But they both felt they understood one another. Just at that moment the Professor's wife came up to interrupt the *tête-à-tête*; 'for that young Owen,' she said to herself, 'is really getting quite too confidential with dear Meenie.'

That same evening Paul paced up and down his rooms in Peckwater with all his soul strangely upheaved within him and tossed and racked by a dozen conflicting doubts and passions. Had he gone 'too far? Had he yielded like Adam to the woman who beguiled him? Had he given way like Samson to the snares of Delilah? For the old Scripture phraseology and imagery, so long burned into his very nature, clung to him still in spite of all his faltering changes of opinion. Had he said more than he thought and felt about the Apostle? Even if he was going to revise his views, was it right, was it candid, was it loyal to the truth, that he should revise them under the biasing influence of Meenie's eyes? If only he could have separated the two questions—the Apostle's mission, and the something which he felt growing up within him! But he could not—and, as he suspected, for a most excellent reason, because the two were intimately bound up in the very warp and woof of his existence. Nature was asserting herself against the religious asceticism of the Apostle; it could not be so wrong for him to feel those feelings that had thrilled every heart in all his ancestors for innumerable generations.

He was in love with Meenie: he knew that clearly now. And this love was after all not such a wicked and terrible feeling; on the contrary, he felt all the better and the purer for it already. But then that might merely be the horrible seductiveness of the thing. Was it not always typified by the cup of Circe, by the song of the Sirens, by all that was alluring and beautiful and hollow? He paced up and down for half an hour, and then (he had sported his oak long ago) he lit his little reading lamp and sat down in the big chair by the bay window. Running his eyes over



his bookshelf, he took out, half by chance, Spencer's 'Sociology.' Then, from sheer weariness, he read on for a while, hardly heeding what he read. At last he got interested, and finished a chapter. When he had finished it, he put the book down, and felt that the struggle was over. Strange that side by side in the same world, in the same London, there should exist two such utterly different types of man as Herbert Spencer and the Gideonite Apostle. The last seemed to belong to the sixteenth century, the first to some new and hitherto uncreated social world. In an age which pro-



duced thinkers like that, how could he ever have mistaken the poor, bigoted, narrow, half-instructed Apostle for a divinely inspired teacher! So far as Paul Owen was concerned, the Gideonite Church and all that belonged to it had melted utterly into thin air.

Three days later, after the Eights in the early evening, Paul found an opportunity of speaking again alone with Meenie. He had taken their party on to the Christchurch barge to see the race, and he was strolling with them afterwards round the meadow walk by the bank of the Cherwell. Paul managed to get a little

in front with Meenie, and entered at once upon the subject of his late embarrassments.

'I have thought it all over since, Miss Bolton,' he said—he half hesitated whether he should say 'Meenie' or not, and she was half disappointed that he didn't, for they were both very young, and very young people fall in love so unaffectedly—'I have thought it all over, and I have come to the conclusion that there is no help for it: I must break openly with the Church.'

'Of course,' said Meenie, simply. 'That I understood.'

He smiled at her ingenuousness. Such a very forward young person! And yet he liked it. 'Well, the next thing is, what to do about it. You see, I have really been obtaining my education, so to speak, under false pretences. I can't continue taking these good people's money after I have ceased to believe in their doctrines. I ought to have faced the question sooner. It was wrong of me to wait until—until it was forced upon me by other considerations.'

This time it was Meenie who blushed. 'But you don't mean to leave Oxford without taking your degree?' she asked quickly.

'No, I think it will be better not. To stop here and try for a fellowship is my best chance of repaying these poor people the money which I have taken from them for no purpose.'

'I never thought of that,' said Meenie. 'You are bound in honour to pay them back, of course.'

Paul liked the instantaneous honesty of that 'of course.' It marked the naturally honourable character; for 'of course,' too, they must wait to marry (young people jump so) till all that money was paid off. 'Fortunately,' he said, 'I have lived economically, and have not spent nearly as much as they guaranteed. I got scholarships up to a hundred a year of my own, and I only took a hundred a year of theirs. They offered me two hundred. But there's five years at a hundred, that makes five hundred pounds—a big debt to begin life with.'

'Never mind,' said Meenie. 'You will get a fellowship, and in a few years you can pay it off.'

'Yes,' said Paul, 'I can pay it off. But I can never pay off the hopes and aspirations I have blighted. I must become a schoolmaster, or a barrister, or something of that sort, and never repay them for their self-sacrifice and devotion in making me whatever I shall become. They may get back their money, but they will have lost their cherished Apostle for ever.'

'Mr. Owen,' Meenie answered solemnly, 'the seal of the

Apostolate lies far deeper than that. It was born in you, and no act of yours can shake it off.'

'Meenie,' he said, looking at her gently, with a changed expression—'Meenie, we shall have to wait many years.'

'Never mind, Paul,' she replied, as naturally as if he had been Paul to her all her life long, 'I can wait if you can. But what will you do for the immediate present?'

I have my scholarship,' he said; 'I can get on partly upon that; and then I can take pupils; and I have only one year more of it.'

So before they parted that night it was all well understood between them that Paul was to declare his defection from the Church at the earliest opportunity; that he was to live as best he might till he could take his degree; that he was then to pay off all the back debt; and that after all these things he and Meenie might get comfortably married whenever they were able. As to the Rector and his wife, or any other parental authorities, they both left them out in the cold as wholly as young people always do leave their elders out on all similar occasions.

'Maria's a born fool!' said the Rector to his wife a week after Meenie's return; 'I always knew she was a fool, but I never knew she was quite such a fool as to permit a thing like this. So far as I can get it out of Edie, and so far as Edie can get it out of Meenie, I understand that she has allowed Meenie to go and get herself engaged to some Dissenter fellow, a Shaker, or a Mormon, or a Communist, or something of the sort, who is the son of a common labourer, and has been sent up to Oxford, Tom tells me, by his own sect, to be made into a gentleman, so as to give some sort or colour of respectability to their absurd doctrines. I shall send the girl to town at once to Emily's, and she shall stop there all next season, to see if she can't manage to get engaged to some young man in decent society at any rate.'

### III.

When Paul Owen returned to Peckham for the long vacation, it was with a heavy heart that he ventured back slowly to his father's cottage. Margaret Owen had put everything straight and neat in the little living room, as she always did, to welcome home her son who had grown into a gentleman; and honest John stood at the threshold beaming with pleasure to wring Paul's hand in

his firm grip, just back unwashed from his day's labour. After the first kissings and greetings were over, John Owen said rather solemnly, 'I have bad news for you, Paul. The Apostle is sick, even unto death.'

When Paul heard that, he was sorely tempted to put off the disclosure for the present; but he felt he must not. So that same night, as they sat together in the dusk near the window where the geraniums stood, he began to unburden his whole mind, gently and tentatively, so as to spare their feelings as much as possible, to his father and mother. He told them how, since he went to Oxford, he had learned to think somewhat differently about many things; how his ideas had gradually deepened and broadened; how he had begun to inquire into fundamentals for himself; how he had feared that the Gideonites took too much for granted, and reposed too implicitly on the supposed critical learning of their Apostle. As he spoke his mother listened in tearful silence; but his father murmured from time to time, 'I was afraid of this already, Paul; I seen it coming, now and again, long ago.' There was pity and regret in his tone, but not a shade of reproachfulness.

At last, however, Paul came to speak, timidly and reservedly, of Meenie. Then his father's eye began to flash a little, and his breath came deeper and harder. When Paul told him briefly that he was engaged to her, the strong man could stand it no longer. He rose up in righteous wrath, and thrust his son at arm's length from him. 'What!' he cried fiercely, 'you don't mean to tell me you have fallen into sin and looked upon the daughters of Midian! It was no Scriptural doubts that druv you on, then, but the desire of the flesh and the lust of the eyes that has lost you! You darè to stand up there, Paul Owen, and tell me that you throw over the Church and the Apostle for the sake of a girl, like a poor miserable Samson! You are no son of mine, and I have nothin' more to say to you.'

But Margaret Owen put her hand on his shoulder and said softly, 'John, let us hear him out.' And John, recalled by that gentle touch, listened once more. Then Paul pleaded his case powerfully again. He quoted Scripture to them; he argued with them, after their own fashion, and down to their own comprehension, text by text; he pitted his critical and exegetical faculty against the Apostle's. Last of all, he turned to his mother, who, tearful still and heartbroken with disappointment, yet looked admiringly upon her learned, eloquent boy, and said to her ten-

derly, 'Remember, mother, you yourself were once in love. You yourself once stood, night after night, leaning on the gate, waiting with your heart beating for a footstep that you knew so well. You yourself once counted the days and the hours and the minutes till the next meeting came.' And Margaret Owen, touched to the heart by that simple appeal, kissed him fervently a dozen times over, the hot tears dropping on his cheek meanwhile; and then, contrary to all the rules of their austere Church, she flung her arms round her husband too, and kissed him passionately the



first time for twenty years, with all the fervour of a floodgate loosed. Paul Owen's apostolate had surely borne its first fruit.

The father stood for a moment in doubt and terror, like one stunned or dazed, and then, in a moment of sudden remembrance, stepped forward and returned the kiss. The spell was broken, and the Apostle's power was no more. What else passed in the cottage that night, when John Owen fell upon his knees and wrestled in spirit, was too wholly internal to the man's own soul for telling here. Next day John and Margaret Owen felt the dream of their lives was gone; but the mother in her heart

rejoiced to think her boy might know the depths of love, and might bring home a real lady for his wife.

On Sunday it was rumoured that the Apostle's ailment was very serious; but young Brother Paul Owen would address the Church. He did so, though not exactly in the way the Church expected. He told them simply and plainly how he had changed his views about certain matters; how he thanked them from his heart for the loan of their money (he was careful to emphasise the word *loan*), which had helped him to carry on his education at Oxford; and how he would repay them the principal and interest, though he could never repay them the kindness, at the earliest possible opportunity. He was so grave, so earnest, so transparently true, that, in spite of the downfall of their dearest hopes, he carried the whole meeting with him, all save one man. That man was Job Grimshaw. Job rose from his place with a look of undisguised triumph as soon as Paul had finished, and, mounting the platform quietly, said his say.

'I knew, Episcops, Presbyters, and Brethren,' he began, 'how this 'ere young man would finish. I saw it the day he was appointed. He's flushing up now the same as he flushed up then when I spoke to him; and it ain't sperritual, it's worldly pride and headstrongness, that's what it is. He's had our money, and he's had his eddication, and now he's going to round on us, just as I said he would. It's all very well talking about paying us back: how's a young man like him to get five hunderd pounds, I should like to know. And if he did even, what sort o' repayment would that be to many of the brethren, who've saved and scraped for five year to let him live like a gentleman among the great and the mighty o' Midian? He's got his eddication out of us, and he can keep that whatever happens, and make a living out of it, too; and now he's going back on us, same as I said he would, and, having got all he can out of the Church, he's going to chuck it away like a sucked orange. I detest such backsliding and such ungratefulness.'

Paul's cup of humiliation was full, but he bit his lip till the blood almost came, and made no answer.

'He boasted in his own strength,' Job went on mercilessly, 'that he wasn't going to be a backslider, and he wasn't going to sign no bond, and he wasn't going to confer with us, but we must trust his honour and honesty, and such like. I've got his very words written down in my notebook 'ere; for I made a note of



'em, foreseeing this. If we'd 'a' bound him down, as I proposed, he wouldn't 'a' dared to go backsliding and rounding on us, and making up to the daughters of Midian, as I don't doubt but what he's been doing.' Paul's tell-tale face showed him at once that he had struck by accident on the right chord. 'But if he ever goes bringing a daughter of Midian here to Peckham,' Job continued, 'we'll show her these very notes, and ask her what she thinks of such dishonourable conduct. The Apostle's dying, that's clear; and before he dies I warrant he shall know this treachery.'

Paul could not stand that last threat. Though he had lost faith in the Apostle as an Apostle, he could never forget the allegiance he had once borne him as a father, or the spell which his powerful individuality had once thrown around him as a teacher. To have embittered that man's dying bed with the shadow of a terrible disappointment would be to Paul a lifelong subject of deep remorse. 'I did not intend to open my mouth in answer to you, Mr. Grimshaw,' he said (for the first time breaking through the customary address of Brother), 'but I pray you, I entreat you, I beseech you, not to harass the Apostle in his last moments with such a subject.'

'Oh yes, I suppose so,' Job Grimshaw answered maliciously, all the ingrained coarseness of the man breaking out in the wrinkles of his face. 'No wonder you don't want him enlightened about your goings on with the daughters of Midian, when you must know as well as I do that his life ain't worth a day's purchase, and that he's a man of independent means, and has left you every penny he's got in his will, because he believes you're a fit successor to the Apostolate. I know it, for I signed as a witness, and I read it through, being a short one, while the other witness was signing. And you must know it as well as I do. I suppose you don't think he'll make another will now; but there's time enough to burn that one anyhow.'

Paul Owen stood aghast at the vulgar baseness of which this lewd fellow supposed him capable. He had never thought of it before; and yet it flashed across his mind in a moment how obvious it was now. Of course the Apostle would leave him his money. He was being educated for the Apostolate, and the Apostolate could not be carried on without the sinews of war. But that Job Grimshaw should think him guilty of angling for the Apostle's money, and then throwing the Church overboard—the bare notion of it was so horrible to him that he could not even

hold up his head to answer the taunt. He sat down and buried his crimson face in his hands; and Job Grimshaw, taking up his hat sturdily, with the air of a man who has to perform an unpleasant duty, left the meeting-room abruptly without another word.

There was a gloomy Sunday dinner that morning in the mason's cottage, and nobody seemed much inclined to speak in any way. But as they were in the midst of their solemn meal, a neighbour who was also a Gideonite came in hurriedly. 'It's all over,' he said, breathless—'all over with us and with the Church. The Apostle is dead. He died this morning.'

Margaret Owen found voice to ask, 'Before Job Grimshaw saw him?'

The neighbour nodded, 'Yes.'

'Thank heaven for that!' cried Paul. 'Then he did not die misunderstanding me!'

'And you'll get his money,' added the neighbour, 'for I was the other witness.'

Paul drew a long breath. 'I wish Meenie was here,' he said. 'I must see her about this.'

#### IV.

A few days later the Apostle was buried, and his will was read over before the assembled Church. By earnest persuasion of his father, Paul consented to be present, though he feared another humiliation from Job Grimshaw. But two days before he had taken the law into his own hands, by writing to Meenie, at her aunt's in Eaton Place; and that very indiscreet young lady, in response, had actually consented to meet him in Kensington Gardens alone the next afternoon. There he sat with her on one of the benches by the Serpentine, and talked the whole matter over with her to his heart's content.

'If the money is really left to me,' he said, 'I must in honour refuse it. It was left to me to carry on the Apostolate, and I can't take it on any other ground. But what ought I to do with it? I can't give it over to the Church, for in three days there will be no Church left to give it to. What shall I do with it?'

'Why,' said Meenie, thoughtfully, 'if I were you I should do this. First, pay back everybody who contributed towards your support in full, principal and interest; then borrow from the remainder as much as you require to complete your Oxford course; and finally, pay back all that and the other money to the fund when you are

able, and hand it over for the purpose of doing some good work in Peckham itself, where your Church was originally founded. If the ideal can't be fulfilled, let the money do something good for the actual.'

'You are quite right, Meenie,' said Paul, 'except in one particular. I will not borrow from the fund for my own support. I will not touch a penny of it, temporarily or permanently, for myself in any way. If it comes to me, I shall make it over to trustees at once for some good object, as you suggest, and shall borrow from them five hundred pounds to repay my own poor people, giving the trustees my bond to repay the fund hereafter. I shall fight my own battle henceforth unaided.'

'You will do as you ought to do, Paul, and I am proud of it.'

So next morning, when the meeting took place, Paul felt somewhat happier in his own mind as to the course he should pursue with reference to Job Grimshaw.

The Senior Episcop opened and read the last will and testament of Arthur Murgess, attorney-at-law. It provided in a few words that all his estate, real and personal, should pass unreservedly to his friend, Paul Owen, of Christchurch, Oxford. It was whispered about that, besides the house and grounds, the personalty might be sworn at 8000*l.*, a vast sum to those simple people.

When the reading was finished, Paul rose and addressed the assembly. He told them briefly the plan he had formed, and insisted on his determination that not a penny of the money should be put to his own uses. He would face the world for himself, and thanks to their kindness he could face it easily enough. He would still earn and pay back all that he owed them. He would use the fund, first for the good of those who had been members of the Church, and afterwards for the good of the people of Peckham generally. And he thanked them from the bottom of his heart for the kindness they had shown him.

Even Job Grimshaw could only mutter to himself that this was not sperritual grace, but mere worldly pride and stubbornness, lest the lad should betray his evil designs, which had thus availed him nothing. 'He has lost his own soul and wrecked the Church for the sake of the money,' Job said, 'and now he dassn't touch a farden of it.'

Next John Owen rose and said slowly, 'Friends, it seems to me we may as well all confess that this Church has gone to pieces. I can't stop in it myself any longer, for I see it's clear agin

nature, and what's agin nature can't be true.' And though the assembly said nothing, it was plain that there were many waverers in the little body whom the affairs of the last week had shaken sadly in their simple faith. Indeed, as a matter of fact, before the end of the month the Gideonite Church had melted away, member by member, till nobody at all was left of the whole assembly but Job Grimshaw.

'My dear,' said the Rector to his wife a few weeks later, laying down his 'Illustrated,' 'this is really a very curious thing. That young fellow Owen, of Christchurch, that Meenie fancied herself engaged to, has just come into a little landed property and eight or nine thousand pounds on his own account. He must be better connected than Tom imagines. Perhaps we might make inquiries about him after all.'

The Rector did make inquiries in the course of the week, and with such results that he returned to the rectory in blank amazement. 'That fellow's mad, Amelia,' he said, 'stark mad, if ever anybody was. The leader of his Little Bethel, or Ebenezer, or whatever it may be, has left him all his property absolutely, without conditions; and the idiot of a boy declares he won't touch a penny of it, because he's ceased to believe in their particular shibboleth, and he thinks the leader wanted him to succeed him. Very right and proper of him, of course, to leave the sect if he can't reconcile it with his conscience, but perfectly Quixotic of him to give up the money and beggar himself outright. Even if his connection was otherwise desirable (which it is far from being), it would be absurd to think of letting Meenie marry such a ridiculous hair-brained fellow.'

Paul and Meenie, however, went their own way, as young people often will, in spite of the Rector. Paul returned next term to Oxford, penniless, but full of resolution, and by dint of taking pupils managed to eke out his scholarship for the next year. At the end of that time he took his first in Greats, and shortly after gained a fellowship. From the very first day he began saving money to pay off that dead weight of five hundred pounds. The kindly ex-Gideonites had mostly protested against his repaying them at all, but in vain: Paul would not make his entry into life, he said, under false pretences. It was a hard pull, but he did it. He took pupils, he lectured, he wrote well and vigorously for the press, he worked late and early with volcanic energy; and by the end of three years he had not only saved the whole of the

sum advanced by the Gideonites, but had also begun to put away a little nest-egg against his marriage with Meenie. And when the editor of a great morning paper in London offered him a permanent place upon the staff, at a large salary, he actually went down to Worcestershire, saw the formidable Rector himself in his own parish, and demanded Meenie outright in marriage. And the Rector observed to his wife that this young Owen seemed a well-behaved and amiable young man; that after all one needn't know anything about his relations if one didn't like; and that as Meenie had quite made up her mind, and was as headstrong as a mule, there was no use trying to oppose her any longer.

Down in Peckham, where Paul Owen lives, and is loved by half the poor of the district, no one has forgotten who was the real founder of the Murgess Institute, which does so much good in encouraging thrift, and is so admirably managed by the founder and his wife. He would take a house nowhere but at Peckham, he said. To the Peckham people he owed his education, and for the Peckham people he would watch the working of his little Institute. There is no better work being done anywhere in that great squalid desert, the east and south-east of London; there is no influence more magnetic than the founder's. John and Margaret Owen have recovered their hopes for their boy, only they run now in another and more feasible direction; and those who witness the good that is being done by the Institute among the poor of Peckham, or who have read that remarkable and brilliant economical work lately published on 'The Future of Co-operation in the East End, by P. O.,' venture to believe that Meenie was right after all, and that even the great social world itself has not yet heard the last of young Paul Owen's lay apostolate.

### THE MANNERS OF POSTHUMOUS MAN.

IN the matter of ghosts I am one of those who believe not, but tremble. Philosophers commonly explain apparitions by observing that the eye-witness expects to see them, and consequently *does* see them. What an explanation! How constantly one wishes to see a cab, or even the homelier omnibus, or, in occasion of need, a policeman! Does a spectral policeman, omnibus, or cab immediately impress itself subjectively on the retina? Does one see what he expects and wishes to see? Of course not. The theory of 'attentive expectation' is not justified in cases like these. You might as well say that a man will find a sovereign in his pocket, when there is no sovereign there, because he expects to do so, as that he will behold a ghost because he is expecting a ghost. I have been expecting with trembling to see a ghost all my life, especially in houses which are reputed to be haunted. Yet I was expecting nothing less than a ghost the only time I ever saw one. The theory of 'expectation' clearly will not hold water. Is there any other more scientific theory? An answer to this question, and an uncommonly disagreeable answer, will be found in a new French book, '*Essai sur l'Humanité Posthume*,' by M. Adolphe d'Assier. In some respects this is the most comic, and in others the most gruesome, work that has ever been written on what M. d'Assier calls 'the manners of posthumous man.' To M. d'Assier posthumous man (his term for a ghost) is just as ordinary a person as primitive man is to Mr. Herbert Spencer. He thinks he knows all about posthumous man, who has this unpleasant feature in common with primitive man, that he is a cannibal. Nay, posthumous man is even more 'regardless,' as the Scotch say, than Mr. Herbert Spencer's client. For primitive man draws the line, in New Caledonia at least, at eating members of his own tribe, whereas posthumous man, better known as a vampire, turns by preference to his friends and relations.

That a scientific writer, and follower of M. Comte (as far as Comte's '*Philosophie Positive*' goes), should firmly believe in vampires and *incubi*, seems a little incongruous. The philosophy of M. Comte takes no notice of a future life. We are to have merely a 'subjective immortality;' we are to be merged in



Humanity (with a capital H), and are to live only in the consequences of our actions. This must be the opinion of M. d'Assier, whose previous works comprise treatises on grammar, geography, and astronomy. Even now he does not appear to believe in the immortality of the soul, but only in the temporary continuance of a shadowy and ill-conditioned ghost, with a malevolent disposition and a physical basis. This is precisely the opinion of the Australian blacks, and of other races in the same stage of absence of civilisation. It is interesting to know, first, how a French Positivist came to agree with the lowest savages, and next to examine his opinions and anecdotes about *l'homme posthume*. When M. d'Assier was a little boy he lived in the remote and rural southern parish of Sentenac, in Ariège. The parish priest died, and the parsonage was immediately haunted by strange sounds and stranger sights. M. d'Assier, though a small boy, thought those stories were absurd inventions, and in this mind he continued till 'the terrible year'—the year of the war. From that ordeal he emerged with threatenings of general paralysis, and since he was threatened with paralysis he has become a believer in 'posthumous man.' This is an extremely frank confession, and everyone who is not a member of the S.P.R.<sup>1</sup> will surmise that M. d'Assier would never have discovered posthumous man if he had not become more or less paralytic. In 1871 he went to 'take the waters' at Aulus, a mountain hydropathic establishment, and there he found posthumous man extremely active in his peculiar 'walk,' as we may call it. The owner of the baths had recently died, but he had by no means abandoned his interest in the establishment. It is a peculiarity of posthumous man that he entirely alters his nature and some of his habits. Alive, the proprietor had been all courtesy and attention to visitors; dead, he diverted himself by knocking blows against the walls, throwing heavy objects on the floor, and generally making night hideous. M. d'Assier at first disbelieved, then (alas!) he investigated, and he was finally convinced by the reports of several trustworthy persons, one of whom had fired at the ghost and hit a tree. This was a lucky miss, according to M. d'Assier, for he is now convinced that a ghost or wraith suffers extreme personal inconvenience if stabbed or shot. Once sure that the Aulus ghost was genuine, M. d'Assier continued his researches. His object in publishing the results of his investigations

<sup>1</sup> Society for Psychical Research.

is to 'strip posthumous man of the veil of the marvellous, and to connect all his proceedings, like other natural phenomena, with the laws of time and space.' One result of these efforts is the discovery that a man, 'like a bird,' *may* be in two places at once. This has previously been thought inconsistent with the laws of time and space, but M. d'Assier makes the phenomenon seem ordinary enough. He is eager 'to free the men of our time from the debilitating hallucinations of spiritualism.' By way of putting the people of our time quite at their ease, he assures them that posthumous man frequently emerges from his retreat, and 'feeds fearsomely,' as Mr. John Payne says, on the living bodies of his nearest relations. He also reassures the timid by discovering that witches can haunt and molest us in visible form, while all the time their other visible form sits quietly at home. To have scientific evidence for these great truths is indeed salutary, and calculated to check the spread of superstitious fears. M. d'Assier asserts that posthumous man is now 'freed from the slightest trace of the supernatural,' but that does not, we fear, prevent posthumous man from being a very awkward customer.

In the true spirit of Baconian induction, M. d'Assier began by collecting 'instances' of the existence and deportment of man on the other side of the grave. We must confess that he has not been very particular about his evidence. It is not good enough to go to a jury, nowadays, though some of it did go to a jury in times past, and so worked on their minds that they burned Jane Brooks, at Chard, for a witch. The first 'instance' is that of the posthumous Abbé Peyton, about whose doings M. d'Assier was sceptical when he was a little boy. He had his evidence collected from the mouths of aged men who remember the affair. The first story shows how two sceptical parishioners lay in wait for the ghost of the Abbé at night, and heard him walking about, moving the chairs, and taking snuff, to which, both before and after his lamented decease, the Abbé was extremely partial. There is no instance of posthumous man smoking a cigarette, but it is established that he snuffs. In another case, the posthumous Abbé was seen reading his breviary. Posthumous man thus retains some of his old habits, while, in other cases, he simply takes to bear-fighting, and making hay of the furniture. In another canton of Ariège, Monsieur X., who died about twenty years ago, used to walk about in his habit as he lived, producing a shrill sound like the snip of a pair of shears. More frequently posthumous man

confines himself to making a nocturnal disturbance. This occurred in the house of the father of M. Charles Sainte-Foix, 'about' 1812. Everything in the house was tossed about; the neighbours even were wakened from ambrosial sleep, and the big dog was seriously alarmed. The disturbance was attributed to a near relation that had just died at a distance, nor did the tumult entirely cease till M. Sainte-Foix carried out certain wishes of the deceased which he had been disposed to ignore. There was some method in the madness of this posthumous man. The noisy proprietor of the establishment at Aulus did not cease to annoy his successors till the house was pulled down in 1872. In 1830, an old lady died at Bastide de Serou (Ariège). Her next step was to break all the glass and crockery in the house, and to drag the bedclothes from people who slept in her room. This M. d'Assier recognises as a very frequent diversion of posthumous man. Masses were said in vain for the repose of this rampagious old lady. Then a rather odd thing happened. A round-robin, signed by the people of the house, was left in a room at night, with pen and ink, and in the round-robin the visitor was requested to state her wishes in writing. Next morning the paper, pen, and ink were found lying on the floor. On the table was laid an open dictionary, and on the open page were three small red stains. The disturbances soon ceased. Apparently the posthumous lady was not strong in spelling, and, after consulting the dictionary, had resigned the attempt to write to her relations. Another posthumous man was the ghost of a lunatic, but he merely behaved like sane posthumous men, and made a fearful racket in the room he haunted. Another posthumous man, who had died in America, appeared to M. Bonnetty, clad in a very remarkable waistcoat. M. Bonnetty sent to America for information, and learned that this waistcoat had been a favourite with the deceased. M. d'Assier tells a good many anecdotes like these, the evidence being usually not at first hand.

Our author thinks he has now established his fact. *Sunt aliquid manes*, there is such a thing as *l'homme d'outre-tombe*. The next step is to strip him of his supernatural character. This M. d'Assier does by maintaining that we all carry about in us a second man, 'something of a shadowy being,' as Dr. Johnson said, but none the less real and physical. He proves his fact, to his own satisfaction, by a number of instances of 'wraiths,' as the Scotch call them—apparitions beheld at a distance, while the

owner of the double is still alive. As a rule, these doubles (which are of a fluid nature) seem to be emanated from the frame in moments of strong excitement, of syncope, or in the hour of death. Thus a woman, who was dying on board ship on her way to Rio Janeiro, fell into a syncope, and announced, on recovering consciousness, that she had visited a friend in Brazil. The friend in Brazil recognised her, and this is an instance of the *dédoublement de la personnalité humaine*. 'I compared the phantom of the living man with the phantom from beyond the tomb,' says M. d'Assier, 'and I readily perceived that they were one and the same personage.' The phantom of the living man can speak when he is not too far removed from his base of supply, so to say—from his reserves of force in the actual body. This is M. d'Assier's theory, which does not fall in well with his theory of posthumous man. For the actual body of posthumous man has necessarily ceased to be a base of supply, and cannot provide the fluid spectral form with any strength. Yet posthumous man is amazingly vigorous, according to the evidence, strikes tremendous knocks on walls and tables, and has been known to move an enormous piano to some distance in a moment of time. How is all this to be explained on the principle of the base of supply, when the body has long been dust? As far as M. d'Assier answers this question, it is by the hypothesis that posthumous man derives his force from the physical and moral constitutions of persons who resemble him in character. M. d'Assier is amazed that phantoms can drink a glass of water *sans se rompre*, but if they can make a large meal (as he believes they can) this ceases to surprise. In fact, he believes in the water, because he believes in something still more prodigiously absurd. He believes that little Dick Jones, in 1658, saw the double of Jane Brooks, a witch; that one Gilson, who did not see the figure, hit at it with a knife; that Jones and Gilson rushed to Jane's house, and found that she had been wounded in the hand, and that (which unluckily is true) poor Jane Brooks was tried at Chard, on March 26, 1658, and condemned to death. From this evidence about the wounding of Jane Brooks he gathers that the phantom has a system of arteries and veins, and he accepts all the stories of witchcraft that used to satisfy English juries. If science is converted to M. d'Assier's opinions, we shall return to the conditions of an African people. One tribe, according to Mr. McDonald, a missionary, is losing about half its numbers by prosecutions for

witchcraft. The other half is perishing by the machinations of the witches.

As a good deal will have to be said to the prejudice of posthumous man, and as even our doubles, according to M. d'Assier, take a hand in malevolent sorcery, this seems the place for an anecdote that redounds to the credit of the common wraith or doppel-gänger. The narrative is given, as the newspapers say, 'on the most reliable authority.' One winter evening, a gentleman, whom we shall call Mr. Jenkins, had been dining quietly at his club, than which no more respectable and classic edifice adorns Pall Mall. In due time Jenkins started for his chambers in the Temple. He is a barrister, and, as the poet sings,

Persuasion tips his tongue whene'er he talks,  
And he has chambers in the King's Bench Walks.

The night was very windy and drizzly, and Jenkins paused on the steps of his club, struggling with his umbrella. On the other side of the street he observed a man dressed exactly like himself, also engaged in a struggle with *his* umbrella. Jenkins walked briskly down the south side of Pall Mall, but he could not help observing that the figure on the other side of the way kept pace with him exactly. He soon became curious about the man and crossed over to observe him more closely. On reaching the north side of Pall Mall, at the entrance of Waterloo Place, he found that he had lost sight of the figure. Rather relieved at this, Jenkins walked on, but, turning casually at the Old Water Colour Society's Gallery, he beheld his companion marching on the opposite, the southern, side of Pall Mall. He crossed again, missed him again, but saw that the figure accompanied him all down the Strand. Jenkins reached the gate of the Temple, knocked, and was admitted by the porter. 'Are you sure you know me?' he asked the porter. 'Know you, sir, of course I do; I've known you for years.' 'You could not mistake anyone else for me?' 'Impossible, sir.' 'Well,' said Jenkins, pointing across Fleet Street, 'do you see that fellow standing there?' 'Yes, sir.' 'Well, he's an impostor. He'll try to get in, and to persuade you that he is me; take care you don't let him in.' The porter promised, and Jenkins, who thought he had at last baffled his follower, went cheerfully to his chambers. He groped about for a match, lighted a candle, and there, to his horror, saw himself sitting in the armchair before the fire. To drop his candle in his fright, to rush downstairs (like the

sailor who took five hours to climb Majuba Hill and came down in three minutes), was to the awestruck Jenkins the work of a moment. He hurried to the porter's lodge. 'Why did you let that fellow in?' he cried. 'Door has not been opened since you came in, sir,' replied the proud porter. On hearing this Jenkins decided not to return to his chambers; he passed the night at a neighbouring hotel. Next day, in the cheerful sunshine, he ventured back to his rooms. The candlestick was lying on the floor, but everything else was orderly. In the bedroom another scene met his eye. The storm of the night before had blown the chimney through the roof, and the heavy coping-stone reposed where Jenkins's head should have been—on the pillow of Jenkins. His double, by frightening him out of his chambers, had saved his life. Let us remember this affecting anecdote when doubles are spoken of with harshness by philosophers.

A good many difficulties in the matter of ghosts are solved by the ingenuity of M. d'Assier. How do ghosts get into rooms when the doors are locked? Athene, in the 'Odyssey,' entered rooms 'like a breath of wind.' That is how ghosts manage it. They have 'fluidic bodies,' and can flow through chinks. It is in vain to put list at the bottom of doors, for 'the wind bloweth where it listeth,' and ghosts, too, can filter through a stone wall. Of course, as M. d'Assier observes, 'the fissures in wood, and doors that do not shut well, give ready access to the fine and elastic tissue of a spectre.' Our author holds that ghosts, like the feet of the lady in Sir John's Suckling's ballad, 'peep in and out, as if they feared the light.' 'Light seems to annihilate their forces,' therefore ghosts are commonly seen in the dark. But here M. d'Assier is not in accord with the best ancient and modern authorities. Both in Homer and Theocritus the darkness shines like fire when anything supernatural is going forward. The Eskimo believe that Tornuks, or spirits, always manifest themselves in a blaze of light. The same light, according to tradition, blazes as an omen on the tombs of the St. Clairs in Roslin.

Seem'd all on fire that chapel proud,  
Where Roslin's chiefs uncoffin'd lie,  
Each baron, for a sable shroud,  
Sheath'd in his iron panoply.

'The tomb-fires of the North,' says Sir Walter, 'are mentioned in most of the Sagas,' in which you read how the whole of the barrow seems to stand open, and full of light. One of the best



ghost-stories, that of the lady whose mother appeared to her and prophesied her death, says the ghost manifested herself in brilliant light. The tale is in the 'Remains' of Dr. J. A. Symonds, and is quoted from Dr. Henry More. The evidence is certainly better than most of what satisfies M. d'Assier. As this author's whole theory precisely corresponds to that of savage men, he cannot well afford to run counter to the very strongly held creed of the Eskimo. But, on the other hand, spiritualists certainly prefer 'dark *séances*,' both in Greenland, Europe, and among the Maories of New Zealand.

Another problem that has puzzled philosophers is the clothes worn by spirits. Generally they appear 'in their habit as they lived.' Now the sceptic is apt to say, 'I can stand the ghost, but where does the ghost get his clothes?' M. d'Assier replies, in point of fact, 'from Poole, and other artists.' Clothes have their ghosts, just as much as men have, and a ghost appears in the ghost of his clothes. M. d'Assier gets his evidence from the famous Seeress of Prévorst, a lady who had seen as many ghosts as Coleridge, but, unlike Coleridge, had not seen 'too many to believe in them.' The seeress 'distinguished the fluidic images of all things.' This is precisely the view of 'primitive man,' only primitive man calls the 'fluidic images' souls, or ghosts. 'Fetichism,' says Mr. McLennan, 'assigns souls to all things.' 'The Khonds have a limited quantity of soul as tribal property, and they explain their custom of female infanticide by saying that the fewer their women are the more soul there will be for the men.' How often do we hear a lady's friends say that she is 'all soul.' To return to the souls of objects: savages show their belief in them, by breaking the pots and other articles which they bury with the dead. The soul, or 'fluidic image,' of the pots is thus set free for the use of the 'fluidic image,' or soul, of the deceased. Adopting this theory, M. d'Assier is enabled to solve another riddle in the manners of posthumous man. We have all heard of the *poltergeist*—the noisy bear-fighting ghost who fills the rooms with strange sounds of breaking glass and falling furniture. The glass, where those sounds are heard, is usually found not to be broken, and when the flying tables and chairs strike people they do not hurt them. 'The person who is struck compares the sensation to that produced by a blow from a soft substance, like a ball of linen or cotton.' The truth is that posthumous man is extremely addicted to the use of missile weapons. 'Le projectile paraît être son arme favorite.' But he does not toss about real

glasses, tables, stones, and chairs. He only throws their 'fluidic images.' The ghost of man knocks about the ghosts of objects. 'The man from beyond the grave acts with stones as he does with clothes. He contents himself with detaching their fluidic images, which become, in his hands, invisible projectiles.' Nothing can be more satisfactory.

Two more questions of great interest remain. First, Does posthumous man last long in a state of activity? Second, Are we all capable of becoming posthumous men? The first question M. d'Assier answers in the negative. This is the most gruesome side of his doctrine. The soul is not immortal. There only remains after death a wandering, comfortless, insatiate shadow, or *larva*—a being with will, thought, desires, for ever unsatisfied; a homeless, hapless creature gradually dwindling in force and in capacity for making communications to the living. 'The slow long agony of its posthumous being is verified, so to speak, experimentally, by the very process of his manifestations. Turbulent at first, they slacken as time passes in force and frequency, and end by quite dying away.' The manifestations are 'the effort of the dead to recall himself to the memory of his kinsfolk, and to implore their assistance.' This is probably the most hideous speculation as to the future life that it has ever entered into the heart of man to conceive. A future life, a terminable future life without hope, home, or activity, but with consciousness of lack of all things good, with hunger and desire—this is reserved for us, according to M. d'Assier. His ideas may be commended to the modern necromants who attempt to build on the evidence of spiritualism and apparitions a demonstration of the future life. If it be true that the investigators of ghost-stories find no examples of ghosts surviving the decease of the body more than one hundred years, the evidence (as they consider it) makes rather for M. d'Assier's theory than for their hope. This horrible Hades is the end of their seeking for a sign. On the other hand, some Banshees appear to be very old indeed. But who would like to survive as a Banshee? M. d'Assier's horrors are not exhausted. Savages believe that the dead manifest themselves in the shape of animals—serpents among the Zulus; tigers, lizards, coyotes, beavers, in other countries of America and Africa. Mr. d'Assier, too, believes that the human ghost may take the animal form. He gives an example of a miller, at Serssols, who appeared in the shape of a kind of dog.

Here is another story of his; the event narrated happened some fifteen years ago, at Saint Lizier, in the house of two brothers. M. d'Assier got the tale from one of them.

'At that time I lived in one of the little houses at the head of the town. I was about twelve years old, and my brother was seventeen or eighteen. We slept in the same room, which was reached by a small staircase with but a few steps. One evening we had just gone to bed, and were not yet asleep, when we heard something coming up the stairs that led to our room. Presently we saw a beast of about the size of a calf. As the window had no shutters, and it was a clear night, we could easily make the brute out. My brother jumped from his bed, seized a pitchfork, faced the beast, and said, in a firm resolute voice, "If you come from God, speak; if you come from the Devil, you will have to settle with me." The animal bolted, and, as he turned, his tail hit my bed. I heard him going downstairs, but he disappeared before my brother, who was at his heels, could see where he went. The door of the house, of course, was locked. We both believed we had to do with a *loup-garou* and we accused one of the neighbours, to whom various adventures of this kind were attributed.'

On this evidence, and evidence such as this, M. d'Assier confirms himself in the savage belief that the doubles of living men sometimes take animal shape. As far as he ventures to theorise on the subject, he is half inclined (oh, shade of Darwin!) to explain it by *atavism*—that is, by a reversion to the animal forms out of which man was evolved. As M. d'Assier firmly believes that dead beasts have ghosts, just as much as men have, it would seem easier to suppose that this calf was simply a posthumous calf like any other. A posthumous mule plays a considerable part in another of M. d'Assier's ghost-stories. The most painful part of his work is consecrated to vampires, and other even more terrible posthumous persons about whom it is not necessary to say much. He is a firm believer in Calmet's tales of Servian villages depopulated by vampires, who (this is the scientific explanation) merely continue in the future life 'the struggle for existence' at the expense of their neighbours. The question remains, Are we all capable of becoming posthumous men? The answer is mixed up with the whole metaphysics of the subject. We have all a 'double,' but we are not all in the habit of disengaging this double so that it appears to other people. That feat depends on

'mesmeric ether,' and 'mesmeric ether' is, fortunately, not often found in large quantities. If anyone is largely endowed with mesmeric ether, and gets into the society of persons equally gifted, then his double is apt to appear, and (in a favourable environment) may prolong its existence after the death of the body. But the favourable conditions are very infrequent, which is, so far, a comfort. A person with plenty of 'nervous ether'—say a medium—is apt to go on existing, especially if he has friends who are also mediums. This is precisely the Eskimo theory that an Angakok, or wizard, makes the most dreadful sort of ghost, and is chiefly seen by other Angakoks. M. d'Assier has not taken into account the singular confirmation which his ideas receive from the beliefs of the lower races. If he had studied his subject in the spirit of the anthropologist, he would find that this latest birth of science is a precise restoration of the notions of Eskimo, Brazilians, Andaman Islanders, and Bushmen. We may take that for confirmation if we please. But it is on the whole more obvious that, if science accepts ghost-stories, the science of savage and civilised man become identical. Positivism is merged in Shamanism, and the Royal Society becomes a gathering of Australian 'Birraarks' and 'Pow-wows.' We need not be much afraid that science in general, or the followers of M. Comte in particular, will be converted by M. d'Assier. But students of 'psychical research,' at least, may be interested in seeing the goal to which their investigations have led M. d'Assier. Granting the facts (which is granting a good deal), there is not much that is glaringly unscientific in the conclusion. A very pretty conclusion it is, and calculated vastly to add to the sum of human happiness and the sanction of human morality.

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